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The U.S. war-time bonanza

Tony Harrison – poetry for performance

'Football and the Decline of Britain'

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Robert Craft on Anthony Burgess's essays

Robert Adams, photographer-aesthete



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Over pictures Nebraska State Highway 2, Box Butte County, Nebraska, a photograph (1979) by Robert Adams from *American Images: Photography 1945-1990* edited by Peter Turner (250pp, Penguin/Barbican Art Gallery, £14.95, 0-14-007988-2)

Making do in a charming

Michael Neve

STEPHEN JAY GOULD
The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in natural history
476pp. Norton. £12.95.
0393 022285

On the evidence of his now very well known writing on natural history, Stephen Jay Gould is interested in a great number of things, and very knowledgeable about almost all of them. His regularity of performance in the pages of the magazine *Natural History* marks the punctuation of a life spent doing other things—teaching, reading, studying his beloved land-snails down in the beautiful Bahamas. Gould's monthly column brings news, not just of the objects of his affection in the natural world, but of his developing commitment to a view of the history of the earth as itself punctuated by extraordinary events. Catastrophes contain continuities: in fact Gould has made it his business to see the oddities and small-scale disasters of the natural record as the actual historical evidence for taking evolution seriously, as a real event.

Such is the scale of Gould's project—and the seriousness of his desire to reach a large audience—that some simplification of the design of his arguments (another favourite Gouldian theme) may be necessary. He grew up in New York City, was obviously nurtured in the Natural History Museum, and is (to the English reader, rather obscurely) obsessed with baseball. Above all, he is an enthusiast, willing to take on the full range of major questions in evolutionary biology and palaeontology, and make something of them. Like T. H. Huxley, whom he resembles perhaps more than he realizes, he wants to get things across, even when this leads to modifications of Darwinian theory.

The central propositions in the Gouldian scheme are on the following lines. The history of the earth, and the history of life on earth, is magnificent but uneven. Uneven mainly in that there are periods of rapid evolutionary diversification, as well as moments of stasis. Uneven also in that life-forms of quite distinct types may be developing alongside one another, sharing space and time. When things change, or speed up, Gould envisages not leaps and bounds, or breaks, between ancestors and descendants; the change lies in the rate of activity itself. The problem here, for many biologists, is what happens during the period of equilibrium—is it a time of stasis, taken literally, or are there large numbers of invisible adaptations accumulating, which then burst out, all at once? There is a causal problem then, in that commitment to the idea of punctuation requires an agency which generates events that come to seem punctuational. Here, in this first example of how he blends biology with palaeontological work, Gould provides a geo-philo-geological answer. Animals and plants spread out by normal means of dispersal over long periods of time, and if a small population cuts off from its larger source there is sufficient isolation to preserve any favourable new adaptations. If successful, and given a possible re-combination of the populations, this new adaptation will spread: the process repeated thousands of times may lead to some particularly new and successful form that rapidly diversifies throughout one particular geological epoch, for example, dinosaurs or birds. In more recent work, Gould has taken up an interest in particularly powerful changes in earth's history—meteoric collision, for example—to bring out the combination of geological and biological events that lead to the death of some life forms and the subsequent rapid development of others. Of this cosmic dimension, more later.

It is well worth looking at this model and its relationship with the life and work of Charles Darwin, whom Gould venerates: it is not nipping, or historically aggressive, to suggest that Gould's Darwinian combination of geology and evolutionary biology is not, in the strict sense, Darwinian. That is, Darwin found himself methodologically indebted to a geologist—St. Charles Lyell—and in opposition to contemporaries, who had their own version of punctuation, such that the overwhelming fea-

ture of classical Darwinism is a belief in the gradualisms and smooth historical continuities that Gould has sought to revise. Darwin transformed Lyell's principle of uniformitarianism in geology into the world of biology, and founded his life's work on the proposal that research into the connections between the history of life and the history of the earth would uncover the connected 'tree' of life's development. But this is not a theory of stops and starts, even of changes in tempo. Nineteenth-century Darwinism does not need, by definition, a causal agent to break up the flow of historical time.

No slight is intended in imputing non-Darwinian features to this first part of Gould's view of things, as it comes across in his essays: Gould is certainly used to this kind of charge by now. But there are differences that need stressing between the model of punctuation and the model of tiny, gradually evolving variations. Darwin for Gould is, above all, a courageous historian. That is to say, he initiated a formal research programme that would make con-

tinuous relay-race, in mass extinctions, and in the randomness and discontinuity of natural history. It is a surging, occasionally violent, sometimes quiet, hierarchy-inducing historical model that continues to cause considerable dispute.

The strongest case against the Gouldian position arises over the question of adaptation, of the tightness of fit between the organization and capacities of organic beings and the environments they negotiate. Partly because Darwin was reversing the argument from Design, as rehearsed by William Paley, some parts of orthodox Darwinism can seem to be particularly impressed by the sheer level of suitability that organisms display in their natural context, the point being that otherwise they would not be there. And, it is important to stress, a lot of current anti-Gouldian feeling in the biological community springs from the view that the evolution of organisms can still be said to show adaptationist evidence of a neat kind, along a gradualist continuity of develop-

ment that is not punctuated or temporally uneven. Gould in this view is seen as too impatient—in a sense too methodologically greedy. The standard Darwinian insights still work, according to this opposition, and Gould is seen as taking the influence of Ernst Mayr and Richard Goldschmidt (who spoke up for certain kinds of saltation in the 1940s) and extending them too far. And the feeling that Gould has drifted too far—surged forward, one might say—from Darwinian methods adds to the feeling that he is having his cake and eating it too, and unfairly invoking a famous ancestor whose actual methods and arguments (especially in geology) he does not, in fact, follow. There is also the morally more difficult question about adaptation, that what nature had made genuinely inefficient, Gould is making merely quaint, merely charming. If, as it were, making a cartoon film out of the scary story of the 'preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life', by not seeing the true relationship between adaptation and maladaptation. Gould, for some, is too cheerful, too committed to eclectic celebration.

The importance of this principle, in Gould's work, cannot be overemphasized. He goes on, as an essayist, to enjoy himself by looking at a wide range of natural phenomena as forms of working life that exist within formal limits but which display within those limits the most striking oddities. Nature is, in a deep sense, a charming mess, albeit Malthusian, albeit predatory. But part of Gould's focus is on the moments in time when selection is not doing its worst, but displaying its curious confusions: not at work jettisoning the improperly adapted, but always making do even if selection has to happen.

Which brings us to social responsibility. To either side of him, Gould has opponents. For some, his admiration for Darwin is naive, since he dangerously underplays the bleak side of Darwin's theory: he has a hero-worship for Darwin that fails to see the connections between Darwin and endorsed social competition, even some alarming views on social selection, close to eugenics. Quite often in his essays, Gould relies on the work of other scholars, and it is a pity that he adheres to the 'great man' model of Darwin, at the expense of seeing him in real social contexts, with actual social values. This is an important point, because Gould attends, admirably, to many lesser-known figures in the history of science, to revive them from historical dismissal—Louis Agassiz, Philip Gosse, A. R. Wallace, to name but a few. The irony (from a historian's point of view) is that he resurrects them only to judge them in the way that he chastizes others for doing. They are still 'wrong', they still made mistakes: compared to Charles Darwin they are still curiosities, with as it were funny thumbs. But here Gould should be more symmetrical in his methods, he should divorce historical figures in the history of science from spurious adaptationist yardsticks, precisely as he has freed the natural order from its allegedly blinkered gaze. If he does not do this he falls under suspicion, for not seeing the social implications of anti-essentialist thinking and for having orthodox Whig historical opinions that he does not own up to. And his second group of opponents are ready at this point with their main charge: that the whole Gouldian project is a vast diversion from true Darwinian biology, with its fair-minded interest in gradual variation and non-catastrophist geology. Gould is trying to follow a Darwin who does not strictly speaking exist. Whatever the arguments there, one thing to me is clear, and it follows from the strength of Gould's commitment to genuine variety and oddity. By opposing false standards of measurement in both human and animal populations—in his measured hostility to mis-measurement—Gould will be seen as one of the last great American liberals, even as his own society turns on the empty uniformity and rigid misconceptions of human worth that he has fought so well. The persistent case he has made, over many years, against racism; eugenics, IQ testing, the sterilization of the unfit—against the whole pompous artifice of nineteenth-century canons of judgment—



Butterflies and caterpillar, an engraving plate after Maria Merian from Dissertation de Generatione et Metamorphosis Insectorum Surinamensis, translated by J. Roussel de Missy, The Hague 1726. This edition, together with Jean-Marie de Sévigne's Histoire des Insectes de l'Europe... 1730, was sold at Sotheby's on May 9 for £12,000.

There exists in the history of nature, for Gould, a hierarchical theory of selection, independent at several levels of genes and organisms. Instead of concentrating, in classical Darwinian ways, on tight competition in a packed world, Gould argues for a kind of his-

was 1986. Neither of them was surprised,

A flood in a time of drought

Robert C. BURGESS

Homage to Qwert Yulop: Selected Journalism
1978-1985
589pp. Hutchinson. £19.95.
0091617103

Anthony Burgess tells us that the two hundred or so essays in *Homage to Qwert Yulop* represent only about a third of those that he wrote in the seven-year period 1978-85. A weekly average of two pieces of journalism, much of it good enough to reprint in hardback, sets a standard that few can match. In Burgess's case the mind reels. Book reviewing is a mere sideline of this novelist (he has written nearly thirty novels to date), the author of a dozen literary studies including the best popular biography of Shakespeare, television and cinema script-writer, translator, editor (notably *A Shorter Finnegans Wake*, a guide as well as a digest), prose anthologist (*The Grand Tour, Coaching Days of England*), and composer of three symphonies and a quantity of other music. Burgess's prolificness - a flood in a time of drought - his virtuosity and polymathy are among the wonders of the deuterio-Elizabethan age.

The range and voracity of reading shown in *Qwert Yulop* are of the same order. If Burgess got through the 1,267 pages of *Les Misérables* in a day and two nights, as he writes, the speed and persistence suggest that he reads, and drafts his reviews of, most books in a single day - as some others do, albeit with short-cutting, or, like Auden, spot-checking. But when Burgess writes, "I, like most people, have read everything [Maugham] ever wrote", a tendency to inflate is exposed, since "most people" have not read any Maugham and not many readers have read all of him. Burgess's estimates of his rereadings arouse some scepticism. Can he have finished Schulberg's *The Disenchanted* "about twenty times" and Hart-Davis's biography of Hugh Walpole "at least ten times"? One does not think of either book responding so repeatedly to Burgess's critical intelligence. Is it even likely that he has read Ellmann's *Joyce* "many times". Instead of only three or four, no matter how frequently thereafter he has continued to refer to this essential biography? Estimates show that Mozart's and Schubert's music probably cannot be copied in the known, or estimated, time in which it was composed, thus indicating that the creator can work faster than the drudge. And Burgess is a creator. The most fascinating chapter in *Qwert Yulop*, an account of his conception of a television version of the "Synoptic Gospels", reveals some of the processes of his highly original imagining mind. Perhaps, like a migratory bird, Burgess does return annually to his favourite habitats.

The inclination to exaggerate is more consequential in matters of literary judgment. Yet when Burgess confesses that "the greatest of all literary joys" is in "saying the dissident thing in the guise of the harmless", he is probably speaking for himself and not for writers collectively. So too, such overstatements as "perhaps the greatest modern poet" is Hugh MacDiarmid and that "one of the greatest fictional characters of all time" is Robertson Davies's Mamousia are obviously intended to promote little-known and underrated authors. Nor are all of these puffs out of proportion: many would endorse the claim that Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero* is "far superior" to certain other British novels of the First World War, as well as to Remarque's German one. But moving to more familiar territory, we wonder if Scott Fitzgerald, however good a writer, is really a "great novelist", and whether an unnamed Irish playwright is really "the world's greatest... in the last hundred years". Not Chekhov, or Ibsen, or Pirandello? Since the word-quotas of the reviews seems not to have permitted Burgess to argue these cases, readers are left to agree or disagree according to their own tastes and prejudices. One's guess is that he persuades the majority of his audiences in the majority of such decisions.

Burgess's principal subject is the art of the novel, his main path the well-trodden one of the genre's modern classics. Good, as expected, on Joyce and Ford, he is still better on Wells and Nabokov, and his critical estimate is nowhere more sharply exposed than when he takes Nabokov's side in the row with Edmund Wilson, the side of the values of art as against those of art as social significance, of James (whom Nabokov detested) over Wells.

In an essay on Bely's *St Petersburg*, Burgess characterizes Nabokov's literary judgments as "flighty" and acknowledges Wilson as "a person very dangerous to disagree with". But Burgess scores Wilson's "blindness to the excellence of Nabokov's prose" and his imperfect understanding of Russian - less reliable, Burgess suggests, than his own. Whether or not he has correctly diagnosed the origins of Wilson's Anglophobia, the writings of the American critic inspire *Qwert Yulop's* best analogy, the remark that anyone reading Wilson's *The Forties after Europe Without Baedeker*, "must have the impression of a film running back from the dining room to the kitchen where the raw materials await the processing into a meal we have already eaten".

For readers not naturally disposed to stay to the end of very long new novels, Burgess's reviews of Vidal, Mailer (*Ancient Evenings* "certainly gives us a new look up the anus"),



and other big best-sellers are particularly welcome. We want enlightened opinion-making, at least of the kind in which we think we can recognize and disregard a personal slant. If Burgess seems to be more candid and harder-hitting in his criticisms of his American, than of his British colleagues, the apparent reason is simply the distancing that he calls cisatlantic. This division does not appear in the essays on writers of an older generation, Djuna Barnes, for one, on whom Burgess ultimately disappoints because he does not commit himself when citing the encomiums of Eliot, Dylan Thomas and Edwin Muir. (One wonders if Auden ever contemplated translating Dag Hammarskjöld's Swedish version of *The Antiphon* into English.)

Burgess excels at capsule summarizing, at pinpointing strengths and prescribing weaknesses, and at delivering short, sharp lessons for novelists. "The exasperating problem" of how "to show character in process of change", is avoided in *Ulysses*, he tells us, because the action takes place in less than twenty-four hours (which overlooks the changes wrought within the same time span in Greek tragedies). Stasis is the novel's major fault, Burgess admits, before going on to name the virtues which outweigh it: "The epic vitality of the scheme, the candour of the presentation of human life as it really is, the awe-inspiring virtuosity of the language...". Impediments to movement and development are again Burgess's concern in reviewing a novel by Updike. With small adjustments of his own, Burgess sets up fifteen lines of Updike's prose in verse form, in order to show that a fine verbal gift can intrude to the extent of reversing priorities, "making the static examinations more important than the thrust of the plot".

Homage to Qwert Yulop contains so many tidbits of autobiography that the reader, this one anyway, looks forward to the full repast that Burgess says he is not quite ready to prepare. We learn that he was "brought up in a lower middle class Catholic ambience" had a

"Lancashire bronchitic boyhood", soldiered in Gibraltar, was a civil servant in Malaysia for six years, returning to England in 1958. Embedded in critical writings, some of his personal glimpses sound slightly self-centred: "In the summer of 1940 the Luftwaffe was dropping bombs on Manchester and sidetracking me from typing my thesis on Christopher Marlowe." Relatives and friends of Mancunians who died in those raids may not feel deeply sympathetic.

The last seventeen essays, the book's lagniappe as Burgess might say, are devoted to music. Though no less competent than the pieces on fiction, they do not come from inside the subject in quite the same way and their primary importance seems to lie in disparaging bad writing on music, or "why so much musical-gaga has a bad name". From time to time he trips: Richard Wagner did not, as Burgess says, coin "for his own works the term 'music-drama'", and to refer to "the uneasy Jewish atonists of the Austro-Hungarian Empire", is to exclude - unintentionally, no doubt - Anton Webern and Alban Berg. From Burgess's remark dated October 1, 1984, "I still write orchestral scores", we infer that he composes regularly. Though some of it has been performed, his music remains an all but unknown quantity. Perhaps an enterprising recording firm could be induced to release the sound track of his musical *Will!* (Shakespeare). The unelaborated statement that he has "devised" an "operatic version of *Ulysses*" only begs questions, more of them when he adds that "nobody wants my *Singspiel*. Opera houses are not yet ready, despite Peter Hall's production of *Moses and Aaron*, for the stage prangings of the id." Did the qualities of the music enter into the decisions of those "opera houses"?

Moments of breast-beating are faintly audible in Burgess's references to his philological knowledge and linguistic attainments. He knows Greek, Latin, Italian, French, German, and some Russian, of course, and it is not greatly surprising to be told that he understands written Cymric, reads, writes and speaks Malay, and that he is able to hold conversations in Anglo-Saxon - as he did with the other Borges in the Argentine Embassy in Washington, to the wonderment of bystanders. He also says that Arabic script is not difficult to learn, or was not for him, and from a travel piece on Barcelona we discover that he reads Catalan, along with "the hisping tongue of Madrid", in which language, as well as twice in English, he has read Cervantes's masterpiece.

The Burgess vocabulary can get in the way, not only with "thetatismus" and "alamdakis-mic" but also with ugly and difficult-to-pronounce everyday words, such as "rawer", "surlily", "scholarly". His fondness for Greek words does not guarantee that he always uses them aptly. Why, for example, would anyone bring in a "stomatological authority" instead of an ordinary dentist when no more is involved than two kinds of teeth? The story of discovering the meaning of the pink marzipan pig, the feminist booby prize, "in an old *Punch* in a thanatologist's waiting room" also fails to convince. Thanatologists - doctors of somatic death - if they exist (none is listed in the Yellow Pages) would not seem likely to have waiting rooms. Finally, the term "cacotopia", encountered several times, is not wholly successful when used with reference to present societies, since the meaning of "remote" seems to cling to it from "utopia". These are odd instances, of course, but Burgess is sometimes pedantic (read sesquipedalian).

So much for the mandatory fault-finding part of a formula that in most instances Burgess himself manages to vary or disguise. *Qwert Yulop* contains an embarrassment of riches and a plenitude of wit, ingenuity, moral discernment, and humane intelligence. We can say of it, as he does of D. H. Lawrence's *Mr Noon*, and of Lawrence's remark therein that books are leaves on the tree of life to be blown away and forgotten and that life is what matters: "This book is full of it."

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Writing in pairs

Frederic Raphael

CARYL BRAHMS and NED SHERRIN
Too Dirty for the Windmill
286pp. Constable. £12.95.
0094663807

The tandem has never been a glamorous conveyance; two authors mounted on a single script tend to look similarly comic. *Pace* Beaumont and Fletcher, comedy is almost always their vehicle: how can a double-act be serious? A great building may be the product of a team, paintings are sometimes begun by one hand, and finished by others, *pas can be de deux*, but there is something systematically single-minded about literary creation. When Ned Sherrin claims that Brahm and Simon are in the same class as Firbank or Evelyn Waugh (who wrote with unforgotten admiration about *Don't, Mr Disraeli*), one may applaud his loyalty without endorsing his judgment. The hilarious reputation of *A Bullet In The Ballet* and *No Bed For Bacon* (both now reissued in paperback by The Hogarth Press) owes a debt to nostalgia and unavailability. *A Bullet In The Ballet* stands up, as its succession of murdered Petroushkas keels over, rather better than its companion. ("Love's Labour's Wunne" is not a joke that bears frequent repetition, and gets it.) Although it is tempting to regard S. J. Simon as the dominant partner, even if Caryl Brahm took a lot of dominating, the co-authors achieved a seamlessness which makes the allocation of his or hers, when it comes to jokes, as difficult as it would be - *mutatis mutandis* - with Muir and Norden. The books are genial and racy and heartless, but Simon insisted that they eschew wit: humour alone could be a joint pursuit. Firbankian camp and the savage mordancy of Waugh were the consequences of solitary obsessions beyond the reach of synthesis.

When Simon died, Caryl Brahm worked with equally productive enthusiasm with Ned Sherrin, though none would accuse them of genius. Their successes were mainly in the theatre (*Song By Song By Sondhelm*, etc) and on television (he produced *That Was The Week That Was* and she wrote lyrics for the peerless Millicent Martin). They also worked together on novels, or at least on "novels". The present memoir is an interleaving of Brahmian diaries and Sherrin's commentary: prose by prose by Brahm and Sherrin. The latter is an experienced grafter with little patience for anything that fails to get a laugh, and rather too much for anything that might.

Caryl Brahm was born Doris Caroline Abrahams, on December 8, 1901. She adopted her *nom de plume* when she began to write light verse and wished to conceal her shame from her parents and her sex from editors. She was a plain child of exotic provenance: her maternal grandfather was Moses Levi, a cosmopolitan merchant, and her grandmother a Turkish lady, Sultana Journado (aka da Silva), whom he married in Constantinople, where he imported brass bedsteads. He left her there when he returned to London annually on business (and pleasure, since he kept a mistress in the East End). After Sultana had borne him twenty-one children, she decided to sail to England with the ten survivors. Among them were Caryl's mother, Pearl, and the father of Anthony and Peter Levi, who appends an unsolemn elegy for his skittish cousin. Sultana Levi took to Croydon without regret and would announce: "I am a *parfait* English lady, and I know too much."

Caryl went to Hebrew classes and to a Jewish boarding school where she was puzzled by the sudden eruption (*sic*) of one Miss Whaplate into a sleeping dormitory, where she announced, "Girls, girls, it is not friendship you feel for one another; it is passion." Caryl dreamt about this Underhills Hall for many years, imagining that she was "back having my hair searched for lice and not on the bath list". If there were echoes of the ghetto (and the harem) in the style of her upbringing, there was also a certain bravura. Sephardic Jews approached England without false modesty, wary more of barbarian food than of local prejudice. When Caryl had her first - inadvertent - shrimp-paite sandwich, she was "on the gentle slope towards oysters" (Wheeler's became a

haunt), "going to theatres on Friday night" (she was to be a critic and first-night freak) "and eating on Yom Kippur" (though she never ceased to be a Jewess, despite a penchant for Anglican bishops).

She began by writing verse for newspapers and for Raphael Tuck, the greetings card firm for which my grandfather worked all his life. It is a relief to learn that she was properly paid (fourpence a line). She was soon a confident performer with her pen, if not on her points: a keen dancer, she never risked rivaling her childhood friend Alicia Markova, who remained loyal despite being the subject of Caryl's criticism. Brahm met Simon - real name Secha (Simon) Jascha Skidelsky - when she was in digs in the Finchley Road and studying at the Royal College of Music. He was the part-time host at a bridge club and "like all Russians, he was studying forestry". He had been born at Harbin, Manchuria, in 1904, so we are told (though at his death in 1948 he is said to be forty-six). By the 1930s, he was an English bridge international and played against Germany. In *Aces All*, Guy Ramsey reported a member of the Aryan team observing that if only the Führer could meet Herr Simon he would abandon antisemitism. In view of Skid's appearance - soup-stained, ash-strewn, double-chinned, bespectacled and wholly shameless - this is a rare tribute. (If Skid had indeed met Hitler, he would never have abandoned any of his policies.) He called Caryl "My dear Sir", except in moments of high approval, when she became "My Caryl", something which, despite rumours of marriage, she apparently never was, in the sexual sense. (Her true love, Jack Berge, was killed in the war. She stopped her diary for a week.) The Brahm-Simon tandem started rolling when she needed help with the captions she

Any way, José

Victoria Glendinning

PATRICE CHAPLIN
Albany Park: An autobiography
191pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
0434114502

Some authors have a talent which is simply for writing, even though they may have little to say. Others have something so urgent to express that it hardly matters whether they can write or not. Patrice Chaplin comes into the second category. *Albany Park* is a peculiar autobiography in that it describes a single obsession. "I first saw José Tarres on the stairs of the Hotel Residencia Internacional in Girona, Spain." That is the very first sentence. She fell for him then, aged fifteen, and years later left her husband Michael Chaplin on his account, knowing that she was throwing away "a jewel". José had "a fatal charm, and seeing what happened to some of the people involved with him, the adjective is not overdone."

The wild fifteen-year-old from a south London suburb hitch-hiked to Spain with her best friend Beryl in the mid-1950s. They made their way by begging, dancing in clubs, stealing, and touting for clients for strip-joints. Encrusted with mascara and pancake make-up, the picaresque nymphs hit the Costa Brava and Girona, and Patrice at least felt she had come home. Halfway through the book she and Beryl part on a road between Perpignan and Carcassonne. Beryl continued hitching north, home to Albany Park. "I'd been her friend for eleven years. I never saw her again." Patrice headed back to Girona, José, and the only happiness she recognized.

He seems to have been a typical Spanish bachelor, under the thumb of his mother. His talent was for making life seem glorious: "I just had to look at him to feel all right." He was "the transmitter of all good things". He was also an enigma, and remains one thirty years on. Was he a gigolo? A homosexual? A political activist? (Is he still alive? We are not told.) He was a liar, with "a lot of front over a lot of subterfuge". Patrice was so transformed just by being with him that "I didn't notice what I wasn't getting."

It may sound trite, but this is a riveting and disturbing book. Patrice Chaplin writes in short bursts, sometimes stumbling and correct-

supplied for David Low's "Musso the dog" cartoons in the *Evening Standard*. They turned to fiction after devising *A Bullet In The Ballet* in a Fleet Street Karmodah, while waiting for the appointment at which Caryl expected to be fired from the *Daily Telegraph* (in the event she was promoted to ballet critic). From 1936 onwards, they worked together on books and scripts for revues and movies, often without instant acclaim. Their world was the raffish Hampstead (it could extend all the way down to the Akropolis restaurant in Charlotte Street) where refugees, spongers and geniuses mixed and hustled, a world where phrases like "You schange schmal scheque?" were readily overheard and converted into copy.

After the outbreak of war, the ARP was where they did their bit. When Caryl confessed to being frightened in the blackout alone, Skid had a prompt answer: "Palooka! All you have to do is to say out loud 'How silently you walk in the blackout since you joined the Commandos, Colonel!' Simon himself was knocked on the head and robbed of ten shillings."

Much of this memoir is wispy stuff, an amalgam of anecdote and misplaced confidence in the legendary quality of shows like *Cindy Ella* or *The Mitford Girls*. However, there is enough warmth in it to excuse even the gormy sophistication of expressions like "ad nauseum" or "faux-naïveté" or "plat du maître". I particularly relished the story of Richard Braithwaite, professor of philosophy in my day at Cambridge, disappearing while on ARP duty and having to confess, "I had just nipped home to take Margaret in my arms." Another personal pleasure lay in the recollections of Guy Ramsey (misspelt along with Vivien Leigh and Tom Courtenay). The story of Guy's Irish grandmother, recycled by Brahm, is worth most of the price of admission.

ing herself. Yet the structure is that of a novel. Her young self is "living on the edge", with no criteria except need. In Paris, vagrant and hungry, she waits in vain for José who has promised to join her: "Every morning I'd be at the Gare Austerlitz at five minutes to eight and my heart never failed to lift as the train came in. I was absolutely sure he'd be on it." Again and again she returns to Girona, like a baby chicken imprinted on the wrong parent. José had "filled me with the love I never had", and nothing ever eradicated that "first ecstatic response".

Her neediness is related to a wretched childhood, compared with which being pursued by a randy and murderous Algerian through the backstreets of Paris (three pages of staccato nightmare) was all in a day's work. Her mother was the illegitimate daughter of an "aristocrat" who is not named, though one of the family friends was Violet Keppel, who was good to Patrice. Her father's family were cosy working-class. Her mother was mentally unbalanced; at three years old, Patrice played obsessively with her dolls to quell the "icy ticklings of fear" as her mother raved and sobbed and bled, and bombs fell on Albany Park. There were even worse happenings, which even now she cannot face or tell, which all went into the "panic account" that had to be paid later. "Across this terrible space José Tarres had put himself and so blocked out all the emptiness."

"Just because my mother was an unsuitable source of love did not mean I didn't want a mother." She chose in José an equally unsuitable source of love; but she seems detached from her history, as only a survivor, or a fantasist, can be. She says of her fiction that "the books were me but I could hide. I did not like being directly confronted." In fact her novels *Having It Away* and *The Sista* are as centred on José (under different names) as is *Albany Park* - the same irresistible charm, the same lies, the selfsame tender, evasive phrases. But nothing in her fiction is as extravagant as some episodes in the autobiography. *The Sista* was billed as "a supernatural love story", but you could say the same of *Albany Park*. In 1966 Patrice Chaplin, now a wife and mother, was in Spain with a friend. Their car burst a tyre in Casella, filling time, she turned into a sidestreet. "A man was leaning sensuously against a wall. The man was José." Neither of them was surprised.



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Hawks, doves, buddies and lovers

Philip French

JOHN HELLMANN
American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam
 241pp. Columbia University Press. \$24.95.
 0231058780
 ROBIN WOOD
Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan
 328pp. Columbia University Press. \$25.
 0231057768

Vietnam was not the most unpopular war in the history of the United States: research conducted by Dr Sol Tax of the University of Chicago in 1968 established that it came fourth – after the war of 1812, the 1846–48 Mexican War and the Civil War. But it was the most perplexing for the nation and its artists, and no editorials appeared asking “Where Are the War Poets?” Publishers did not go in search of combat novels, and of the many published none has enjoyed a popularity or acclaim comparable with those by John Hersey, Irwin Shaw, Norman Mailer and others in the 1940s and 50s. As for Hollywood, there was a virtual refusal to produce Vietnam movies, patriotic or otherwise, though it was to the cinema rather than fiction the nation's young now looked.

When, in 1975, Julian Smith wrote the first book on Hollywood and Vietnam, he had only *The Green Berets* (entirely the personal project of its star and co-director John Wayne) and a few home-front pictures about campus unrest and disturbed veterans to work on. He gave it the appropriate title *Looking Away* and it remains one of the best, and least known, studies of post-war Hollywood.

The films eventually came in a single wave in 1978–79 with the concurrent appearance of *Dog Soldiers*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Go Tell the Spartans* and *Apocalypse Now*. This group was the subject of Gilbert Adair's *Hollywood's Vietnam* (1981) – a disappointing book, but good enough and sufficiently well-publicized to discourage publishers from commissioning further, more substantial works.

John Hellmann appears unaware of Smith and Adair. He casts his net wider than either of them to take in novels and imaginative non-fiction, as well as the movies, and his principal concern is with American frontier myths and their influence. Predictably, the writer from America's great tradition he cites most frequently is Fenimore Cooper.

Professor Hellmann's choice of point-of-departure is *The Ugly American*, the 1959 admontory novel by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, that through its influence on the general public and on opinion leaders, John F. Kennedy among them, might be considered (though Hellmann doesn't say so) the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the Vietnam War. Later, he uses the book to draw together the war's literary hawks and doves:

The heroes of *The Ugly American* rebel against comfort-seeking careerists in the American foreign service; the Special Forces of periodical article and bestseller defy convention-bound Regular Army officers; the author-protagonists of *Hanoi* [May]

McCarthy] and *Trip to Hanoi* [Susan Sontag] set themselves against the robot-like flyers who bomb North Vietnam; psychologically all are seeking to leave civilisation, the East, the city, the past, the conscious mind – Europe – to enter the wilderness, the West, nature, the future – America.

Interesting and suggestive as Hellmann's monograph is, it does not range far enough and it ploughs a shallow cultural furrow. He neglects the theatre altogether (David Rabe's *Vietnam Trilogy*, Lanford Wilson's superb *5th of July*, and such satirical pieces as Joseph Heller's *We Bombed in New Haven* demand attention). He disregards considerable bodies of allegorical films (especially Westerns, but also historical works such as *The Wind and the Lion*); he ignores European responses to the American mythology he is dealing with and pays no attention to the poets. Oddly, he never once mentions Heller's *Catch-22*, one of the two great prophetic novels (the other, of course, being Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*) that came into their own during the Vietnam War. Greene and Heller were packed in the knapsacks of combatants and journalists alike in South-East Asia.

Robin Wood is a British critic who observes the United States from its cold Northern rim as Professor of Film Studies at York University, Ontario, Canada. His *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* also contains no reference to *Looking Away* or *Hollywood's Vietnam*, and his title is somewhat misleading. He would have been better advised to call his collection of essays, *The American Cinema from Revolution to Reaction*, because for Wood “Vietnam” is a cluster of radical attitudes associated with feminism, gay liberation, the rejection of middle-class values and consumer-capitalism.

From auteur to product

Zachary Leader

PAM COOK (Editor)
The Cinema Book
 377pp. British Film Institute. £12.95.
 085170 1442

The Cinema Book has had an unusual genesis. Its original purpose was to provide a sort of *catalogue raisonné* for the British Film Institute's collection of “study extracts” or film clips, which was developed in the 1960s by the BFI's Education Department as an aid in the teaching of film. By the early 1980s its sections or headings were thought to be dated and overlapping. In the course of providing a new set of categories for the collection, the compilers of the present volume were forced to think back over the history of the issues around which the collection (that is, selection) was grouped. “Rather than a catalogue of extracts, the book became an account of the Education Department's involvement in the shifting terrain of film studies over a certain period.” That period stretches, roughly, from the 1950s to the present, and for anyone interested in the history and character of the academic study of film during these years, this book is worth consulting.

Though it is perfectly possible to use *The Cinema Book* simply as a catalogue (the final hundred pages consist of an alphabetical list of extracts, together with production notes and synopses of the films from which the extracts are taken) the function of each clip is discussed earlier, in the course of a 250-page survey of the critical and theoretical debates which shaped the selection. This survey is divided into five sections: History of the Cinema, Genre, Authorship and Cinema, History of Narrative Codes, and Film Narrative and the Structuralist Controversy. Each section consists of a punishingly exhaustive and ill-written central exposition, lavishly illustrated with stills from the extracts, plus almost as much “marginal” material (printed on grey backing) explaining the extracts themselves. It is here, in other words, scattered amidst the relevant general discussion, that the pedagogical aim of each extract is explained. This format has certain attractions: it makes sense to surround individual “regions” with the larger debates out of which they grew. But it also makes for a cluttered and disrupted page, and for a somewhat

And “Reagan” is expressive shorthand for a repressive backlash seeking to restore traditional values.

To Professor Hellmann,

The secret subject of the *Star Wars* trilogy is the traumatic passage of the American self-concept through the self-discovery of the Vietnam horror, and its potential power is to energise Americans to move forward from that experience with a modified conception of their ideal character and destiny.

To Professor Wood, “from the triumph of the Force to the Triumph of the Will is but a short step”.

Wood started out by fusing his Cambridge mentor, F. R. Leavis's “common pursuit” with *Cahiers du Cinéma's* *politique des auteurs* in an outstanding 1965 monograph on Hitchcock that placed him among the forefront of present-day film critics. The nature of his affirmation was expressed in his acknowledging “my deep gratitude to my wife, without her the book would never have been written” and praising “the characteristic Hitchcock moral tone: the utterly unsentimental and ruthless condemnation of the forces that make for disorder, coupled with a full awareness of their dangerously tempting fascination”. He has come a long way since then.

In 1967, Wood's *Personal Views* was dedicated “To John with Love”, for “nothing in this book would be quite the same were it not for my union with John Anderson”. Two years later he wrote a celebrated essay “The Responsibilities of a Gay Film Critic”, and now his *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan* is dedicated “For Richard with Love”, and the acknowledgements conclude by thanking “Richard Lippe, my lover since 1977 . . . without his support, most of it would never have

unwieldy and convoluted work of reference.

Many of the issues or debates on which the extracts centre boil down to a single one: that of finding a proper place and voice for the discussion of commercial or “popular” cinema – that is, of Hollywood. When the French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* formulated the *politique des auteurs* in the 1950s its aim was to deny – or to deny as defining – the merely industrial character of film production. Not only could the most commercial of film-makers – Hitchcock and Ford, for example – qualify as *artistes* or *auteurs*, rather than mere *metteurs en scène*, but “film for film, director for director”, wrote Andrew Sarris, editor of the English-language edition of *Cahiers*, the American cinema was “consistently superior to that of the rest of the world from 1915 through 1965”. For Sarris and other followers and adapters of the *Cahiers* line, *auteur* theory was regarded “primarily as a critical device for recording the history of the American cinema, the only cinema in the world worth exploring in depth beneath the frosting of a few great directors at the top”.

The obvious limitations of *auteur* theory when applied to the American mainstream quickly gave rise to alternative approaches. “Cinematic genre criticism”, for example, “grew out of the growing dissatisfaction with *auteur* analysis of Hollywood product”, while structuralist approaches and the renewed interest in Marxist aesthetics in the late 1960s and 70s allowed genre criticism “to take account of conditions of production and consumption of film and their relationships to ideology” – that is, to take seriously the obvious commercial origins and aims of the Hollywood “product”. The appeal of post-structuralist attacks on authorship and intention, the shift “towards the work as a set of contradictory relationship between structural elements which interact to produce the author's world-view rather than express it” (a typical passage), is also obvious: how much easier to look past creator to creation when the creator, in question is Roger Corman, say, or Frank Tashlin – rather than Kurosawa or Milton.

The reference to literary models recalls the close connection between British film studies and academic English. Again and again in this volume, changes in academic film criticism correspond to those in literary study. The development of *auteur* theory in Britain, for example, reflects the influence of Leavis, especially in

been written in the first place”.

These dedications are signposts of a passionate commitment. As a Marxist and a gay activist Wood does not merely observe that “since the early 60s, the central theme of American cinema has been, increasingly, disintegration and breakdown”, he positively welcomes and wills the destruction of the family and “patriarchal capitalist culture”. His once clean prose is now tarnished by theoretical jargon, and added to the familiar, self-righteous Leavisian rigour is a crusading polemical thrust that is both pervasive and limiting. He is aware of this, as the portentous introduction to Chapter Eleven, “From Buddies to Lovers” reveals:

Our civilisation's great next step forward – if it is permitted one – will be the recognition and acceptance of constitutional bisexuality: an advance comparable to, and in certain respects more important than the general acceptance of birth control. It had better be said at once that the reader who cannot accept this proposition, at least as a working hypothesis, is going to have great difficulty with much of the remainder of this book.

The origins of the book in magazine articles and Wood's attitude combine to narrow the focus. The revival of collegiate-style humour and the role of Clint Eastwood are passed over and numerous important radical works in mainstream cinema like *Silkwood* and *Daniel* are ignored, or in the case of the courageous *Under Fire* given a brief, disparaging mention. Fortunately much of what Professor Wood says is sharply perceptive, if you can adjust to the ideological framework; and he retains an acute analytical intelligence. The two extended pieces on the horror movie are essential reading; and he has written one of the few thorough-going North American defences of Michael Cimino's masterly *Heaven's Gate*.

the writings of Robin Wood and other contributors to the magazine *Movie*, though Leavis was hardly a natural ally of Hollywood; while the detailed “reading” of films, in *Movie* and other journals of the 1960s, bears an obvious relation to the fashion for close analysis or practical criticism in literary study. Later on, when the more “progressive” elements of academic English turned to theory, so too – though more eagerly – did film study, and the same proselytizing figures – notably Stephen Heath and Colin McCabe – appear prominently in both fields. In the early 1970s *Movie* gave way to *Screen*, just as the earlier *Sequence* and *Sight and Sound* had given way to *Movie*. *Screen's* commitment in 1971 to “political and theoretical struggle” became the new fashion, though today only the feminist dimension of that “struggle”, as in literary study, seems particularly vigorous. Hence the prominent role played by women in the present volume.

The weaknesses and irritations of *The Cinema Book* are those of much current literary theory: too often the ostensible object of study in these pages is lost beneath a welter of cumbersome preliminaries; the simplest points are dressed up in the most fantastical and arcane terms; the current line is predictably toed, though the contributors are by no means the most extreme of their sort. The worst offenders are the authors of the sections on *auteur* theory and those on the Film Narrative and the Structuralist Controversy, but even the opening historical sections are awkwardly and ploddingly written, despite much fascinating and genuinely scholarly detail.

Dark Star: The meteoric rise and eclipse of John Gilbert, by Beatrice Gilbert Fountain, with John R. Maxin and with an Introduction by Garson Kanin (287pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £15. 0 283 99260 3); is a reassessment of Gilbert's life and short, spectacularly successful, career as one of silent cinema's romantic stars. Best remembered for his love scenes with Greta Garbo in such films as *Flesh and the Devil* and *A Woman of Affairs*, Gilbert failed to make the transition from silent to talking films. According to Miss Fountain, his lack of success was due not to the unsuitability of his light baritone voice for the new medium but instead to the animosity of Louis B. Mayer, who, from the late 1920s, cast him in mediocre films and took every opportunity to comment on the actor's unreliability and excessive drinking.

The exclusive other-world

Christopher Reid

ROBERT ADAMS
Summer Nights
 Unnumbered pages with black-and-white photographs. Oxford: Phaidon. £19.95.
 089381 1416

Robert Adams is both a photographer and a writer about photography. He has defied Barnett Newman's perhaps too often quoted aphorism, that “aesthetics is for the artist as ornithology is for the birds”, to the extent of setting out his ideas on the art he practises in a book entitled *Beauty in Photography: Essays in defense of traditional values*, published by Aperture in 1981. If not quite as thorough or systematic as the work of a fully fledged ornithologist, these essays are a long way from the shrieks and twitters generally heard in bird-land. They add up, in effect, to a passionate and eloquent appeal on behalf of a classical standard of beauty which is certainly unfashionable at present, and that Adams himself, too honest not to recognize the serious challenge posed by rival schools of thought and practice, evidently has difficulty in defining.

In the last resort, he falls back on the device to which all classical arbiters are prone – that of peremptory exclusion. There are certain photographs whose power he is unable to

deny, and a number of these, Jacob Riis's “Blind Beggar” of 1888 and Robert Capa's “Spain” of 1936 among them, he decently illustrates alongside his text; but it soon becomes clear that some obstinately rooted personal prejudice will not allow him to include them in his canon of beauty. They contain, it seems, an element of anarchic drama that puts them beyond the pale. Encumbered with an aesthetic system which ruled out so much that was of urgent concern in human experience, a more rigorous thinker might have dropped the whole

apparatus and begun again, even if it meant forfeiting the talismanic word “beauty”. Adams, however, refuses to let it go. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to find him in eager pursuit of beauty throughout his new collection of photographs, *Summer Nights*. Many of these images are truly beautiful: the artist's marvellous discovery that by relinquishing outdoor photography's customary dependence on daylight, and relying instead on whatever illumination may have been provided by the night sky or human artifice, a



“Camp in Uvalde Park, Texas” – a detail; it is taken from Mark Jung's J. E. Stimson: Photographer of the West (274pp. University of Nebraska Press. £25.45. 0 8030 2565 2).

From fodder bin to garret

Jamey Gambrell

MARILYN RUESCHEMEYER, IGOR GOLOMSHTOK and JANET KENNEDY
Soviet Emigré Artists: Life and work in the USSR and the United States
 170pp. M.E. Sharpe, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU. \$25.
 087332 2967

The three essays in this book, written by a Soviet art historian, a sociologist, and an American art historian, respectively, present a socio-aesthetic group portrait of Soviet émigré artists currently living in the United States, as well as a short history of the art world from which they chose to emigrate.

In an excellent account of the bureaucracy which forms all Soviet artists, “whether they work officially or unofficially”, Igor Golomshok outlines the historical development of the Soviet art machine from the Revolution to the present. He details the many privileges Soviet society affords official artists, and examines the political and social functions of major cultural institutions such as the Artists Union, the Élite Academy of Arts, the Ministry of Culture and that vast *kormushka* (“fodder bin”), the Art Fund, which is responsible for assuring the livelihood of the 15,000 Artists' Union members. He also provides valuable insights into Soviet art education and the repercussions of its exclusivity, ideological approach to art history. Perhaps one of the most ironic of these pertains to “un-official” art, whose development and “slippery” relationship to the official world is discussed as well. Since “the Soviet artist spends his entire formal education in the artificial atmosphere of . . . the past century”, when suddenly exposed to modernism he is liable to “take the systems of Kandinsky or Pollock for the last word in art and . . . begin to invent a wooden bicycle”. On the ever-troublesome question, “what is Socialist Realism?” Golomshok affirms the disarming, but pragmatic truth that “once the Academy of Arts of the USSR was created there was no longer any necessity for theoretical deliberation . . . the standard . . . of Soviet official art . . . henceforth would be what the members of the Academy were producing”.

The sociologist Marilyn Rueschemeyer interviewed twenty-five artists in addition to a few dealers and collectors of Soviet émigré art. In the foreword, she gives the basic socio-ethnic statistics of the third-wave emigration, and in the longest section of the book goes on to itemize the great expectations (one is tempted to say “illusions of grandeur”) and even greater disappointments of her respondents. Contrary to the impression this catalogue of

malaise is apparently meant to convey, it only demonstrates that the émigrés' lives are much like everyone else's. Though their situation is attended by the particular psychological pathos of emigration to a chaotic, unfamiliar world where the individual is ignored rather than coddled from cradle to grave by a series of paternalistic, if authoritarian, institutions, the problems of these artists are anything but special. The lack of affordable housing in art centres like Manhattan and difficulties in finding a “good” gallery, making a living from one's art, and obtaining the recognition of critics, are conditions that at least 98 per cent of the estimated 90,000 artists living in New York share with them. Most, though not all, of the artists interviewed expressed feelings of isolation, suspicion and jealousy (of other Russians as well as of Americans) and are nostalgic for the supportive community they had in the USSR. Similar feelings are also typical of American artists, though their nostalgia is for the good old days of the Abstract Expressionists' Cedar Tavern binges, when artists cared more about

art than fame.

Janet Kennedy's chapter discusses, quite impartially, the work of the most notable émigré artists living in New York and how it has been affected by emigration. The “older”, artistically conservative generation (which includes Chermakine, Tiulpanov, Tselkov and Neizvestny) possesses stylistic affinities to Surrealism and evidences a peculiarly Russian mix of metaphysics and religion. The “younger” generation, whose work is closer to Pop and Conceptual art and often satirizes Socialist Realism, includes Komar and Melamid, Rimma and Valery Gerlovina, Vagrich Bakhtchanyan and Alexander Kosolapov. Though Kennedy's characterization of these artists is adequate, most of them (the exceptions are Komar and Melamid, and to some extent the Gerlovins) have not received as much attention as she implies. All in all, this book would have performed a greater service to artists and readers alike if more space had been devoted to critical analysis of the art, and less to the voicing of personal disillusionment.

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Decimation islands

Stephen Mills

BRITON COOPER BUSCH
The War Against the Seals: A history of the North American seal fishery
 374pp. Alan Sutton Publishing, 30, Brunswick Road, Gloucester, GL1 1JJ. £18.50.
 0862992176

Sealing was never a noble profession. It was undertaken, for the most part, by underpaid underdogs whose lives were otherwise so desperate that they were often willing to be dumped on remote South-Sea islands with no certainty of remuneration or rescue. Apart from the everyday hazards of scurvy, starvation and drowning, the most enduring problem was boredom. In the first weeks of their stay crews would locate the seals, perhaps fight with rival gangs to secure their patch, form lines past which the prey could be driven and clubbed to death, and prepare the skins—10,000 or so in a successful venture. But then they might have to wait for months, surrounded by the stench of decaying corpses, until their ship returned for them.

Of course, only the lucky ones had to put up with the smell. Increasingly, after the first decade of the nineteenth century, there were no seals left to slaughter. In 1810, a gang of four sealers was put ashore on Snares Island, 200 kilometres south of New Zealand, only to find all the seals gone. They sat there for seven years until a ship came that way again.

Snares Island had been discovered by Broughton and Vancouver in 1791; its seals lasted only another nineteen years. Desolation, discovered by the Breton noble Kerguelen in 1772, was finished for fur seals by 1820, and Macquarie Island, not sighted until 1810, yielded 180,000 skins in its first three years and was exhausted after ten.

In *The War Against the Seals*, however, it is the commercial battle-lines that most interest Briton Cooper Busch. He casts only the coolest of glances at human misery and eschews any immoderate or anachronistic moralizing about conservation, dealing with the first stirrings of

conscience when they arose, at the end of the last century. Until then, he concentrates on which ships went where, from which ports and how many skins they took; on what minute share in each voyage a crewman could expect; on profit margins of companies and on how long it might take a successful captain to grow rich. Few did, apparently.

The North American sealing industry consisted of the early South-Sea adventurers from Boston and Stonington who traded their skins in China for silks and spices; the Newfoundland-based harvest of harp-seals out on the pack-ice of Labrador; and the hunt, in the far North Pacific and Bering Sea, which grew up on the back of the Russian trade in sea otter pelts and ended with a US government-controlled cull of the vast fur seal colony on the Pribilof Islands. There was also the elephant seal trade, more an off-shoot of the whaling business. "One need not sentimentalize over sea elephants," wrote a Frenchman, Rallier du Baty. "Their only use to the world is to provide blubber." Blubber meant oil and an eighteen foot bull meant twenty-one gallons. According to Busch, between 1840 and 1890 a quarter of the "whalers" out of New London ended up at Desolation killing elephant seals. He estimates that a million were taken in all. In the quest for oil anything with a bit of blubber, even the occasional careless crewman, might make its way into the rendering vats. Even as late as 1919, one Joseph Hatch was cheerfully melting down King penguins on Macquarie. The plant was described that year by an eye-witness: "They waddle along at their quaint gait almost laughing, with no suspicion whatever of the cruel fate in store for them. They round a corner full of curiosity, and that is the end of them; for a knock on the head and a kick send them into the boiler."

In the last third of the nineteenth century, petroleum reduced the value of seal oil, but bull elephant seals continued to be killed for their "trimmings". The penis, testicles and gall bladder were used as medicines and aphrodisiacs in China and the whiskers made excellent cleaners for opium pipes. For these trinkets,

weighing a couple of pounds—price three dollars all-in—a thousand pounds-weight of animal might be wasted.

The commercial angle taken by Busch is illuminating. He compares, for instance, the hefty profits amassed by the ACC, the Alaska Commercial Company, which operated the first government sealing lease on the Pribilof Islands, with the dismal conditions of the Aleut labour-force which the Russians had forcibly settled there and which the company continued to treat as serfs. The Aleuts received a minimal payment in kind, housing, medical care, food and clothing hand-outs, but were forbidden to mix with whites or leave the islands. Their upkeep between 1872 and 1892 cost the company 3.3 per cent of gross income. A further 21.6 per cent went to the United States government in royalties and the rest, around a million dollars a year, was profit. No wonder the company could charm its influential share-holders with an average annual dividend of \$46.50 dollars per 100 dollar share. The only thing that can be said in the ACC's favour, since it decimated the seals, is that the Aleuts fared even worse after management of the Pribilofs passed directly to the federal government in 1910.

Busch's analysis of the terms binding a typical Newfoundland sealer heading for the ice shows that he, too, entered a state of near enslavement. In return for as little as 1/15 of the profits he was charged a fee for his berth, a contribution towards the cost of loading and fuelling the ship, the cost of his food and 30 per cent interest on any goods he had to acquire on board. On a poor trip he could return home in debt to his employers. Most ordinary sealers simply lived on dreams of the freakish luck enjoyed, once, by the crew of the Retriever. In 1866 she returned from the ice to her home port of Harbour Grace with 23,400 seals and every man received over three hundred dollars—a record share.

All in all, it was a grim business. Busch does not present his opinions, but his book, well researched and methodical, reveals one of the ugliest faces capitalism has ever shown to the world.

Americans abroad

Peter Marshall

JONATHAN R. DULL
A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution
 229pp. Yale University Press. £15.95.
 0300034199

An avowed purpose of Jonathan R. Dull's *A Diplomatic History of the American Revolution* is to replace the comparable study published fifty years ago by Samuel Flagg Bemis but "by now vastly out of date". Certainly, in the intervening period, the efforts of historians (here set out in an extensive and useful critical bibliography) have yielded important additional material: numerous articles and monographs must be taken into account as well as sources such as *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, of which Dull is associate editor. The difference in approach between Bemis and Dull is not, however, solely the outcome of the passage of time and the industry of researchers. The scope and significance of the diplomatic scene constitute a ground for fundamental disagreement.

In its simplest form this distinction can be seen in the contrasting emphases assigned to the American role in events. Bemis awarded pride of place and particular prominence to the factual, and perhaps even more to the emotional importance of the emergence and recognition of the new nation. He closed his account with the assertion that "the greatest victory in the annals of American diplomacy was won at the outset by Franklin, Jay, and Adams"—the negotiators of the Treaty of Paris. Dull, on the other hand, concludes that victory "depended on a heavy dose of foreign help and abundant good luck", with the aid being offered for reasons that had little to do with sympathy for the Revolution. A final sentence declares that, "for the diplomatic historian, the moral of the American Revolution thus may be the unpredictability, the expense, and the danger of war". A further half-century of national experience may have helped form this judgment.

The pattern of European diplomacy takes precedence over the pursuit of American nationhood and is examined not only in the accustomed locations of London, Paris, Madrid and The Hague but also in the, for these purposes, less frequented capitals of Vienna and St Petersburg. The presence of American diplomats—even of Franklin—receives less attention than the part played by the Revolution in creating the foreign policy of European Powers. To be sure, some factors escape major reevaluation: British diplomatic efforts, whether seen in a European or an American context, fail to secure the faintest of praise. This presumed incompetence is not, however, to be seen as proof or cause of an American superiority which, if it came about, did so for reasons in large part related to the national interests of Britain's European enemies. Britain's defeat was followed by economic prosperity: the victors, on the other hand, experienced financial misfortunes that, in the case of France, would prove fatal.

This terse, spare, somewhat impersonal assessment of diplomatic events contrasts both in style and approach with that offered by Bemis. The shift from diplomats to diplomacy expands the subject and reduces the human factor—an approach more applicable to eighteenth-century Europe than to America. Until the nation's existence was acknowledged its representatives would be more evident than its foreign policies. On the qualities of the first American diplomats much would depend, even if little could be foreseen.

Recently published is *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century* edited and with an introduction by Peter Iverson (277pp. University of Oklahoma Press. £9.95. 0 8061 1959 4), an anthology of articles on American Indian history since the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. Contributions include Tom Holm on Indian participation in the Second World War, Donald L. Fixico on "the Demand for Natural Energy Resources on Reservation Lands" and Vine Deloria Jr. on Indian rights.

The euphoria years and after

Susan Strange

HAROLD G. VATTER
The U.S. Economy in World War II
 198pp. New York: Columbia University Press. \$25.
 0231 057687
ROBERT A. POLLARD
Economic Security and the Origins of The Cold War, 1945-1950
 378pp. New York: Columbia University Press. \$32.50.
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ESPERANZA DURAN
Latin America and the World Recession
 162pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.
 0521 302714
LOUKAS TSOUKALIS (Editor)
Europe, America and the World Economy
 279pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
 0631 14222 X

The United States economy grew during the Second World War faster and more prodigiously than ever before, more than a little because of government intervention. This is surely a timely and salutary correction to the ideological myth that the United States prospered best the more government stays out of business. Harold G. Vatter, Emeritus Professor of Economic History at Portland, Oregon, is just the man to make the point. In *The U.S. Economy in World War II* he does so with admirable brevity, authority and conviction, and the result is a book that is easy and entertaining to read.

When the war began in 1939, he reminds us, there were 9½ million unemployed in the United States; the stock of productive investment was no greater than it had been in 1926, and public spending took only 5.6 per cent of GNP. By 1941, it had gone up to 16 per cent, and by 1943, unemployment was down to 1¼ million, while civilian productivity had gone up by 27 per cent. Hard as Roosevelt and the New Deal team tried to restore confidence and get the economy moving again, they had only very limited success. "Only the onset of war", Vatter concludes, "brought into operation Keynesian deficit spending of sufficient magnitude to end 12 years of mass unemployment."

Nor was war-time economic policy just a matter of paying out more public money for defence contracts. The federal government vastly extended the tentative efforts it had made in the 1930s to create a truly mixed economy, with such enterprises as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Hoover dam. It built oil refineries and long-distance oil pipelines. It built steel mills—as much as half the new war-time capacity in steel was state-owned—and it established a whole new industry producing synthetic rubber. True, business was a willing partner of the state—and mostly big business at that. Three-quarters of the new state-owned industrial capacity was operated by only a hundred large firms. (And for the most part it was they, of course, who benefited at the end of the war when the government hastily disposed of \$17 billion worth of property, much of it at bargain prices.) As Vatter comments, there was a sharp inconsistency between the professed public purpose of affording small firms an opportunity to acquire war plant and surplus property on equal terms with larger competitors, on the one hand, and the avowed aim of refraining from unduly disturbing established market positions on the other. In the aluminium business, for instance, all that government policy succeeded in doing was to replace the pre-war Alcoa monopoly with an oligopoly of Alcoa, Reynolds and Kaiser. The same story was repeated in steel, in oil, in chemicals and in synthetic rubber.

In the meantime, though, the federal government had done more for the United States than put the unemployed back to work. It had boosted technical innovation in all the defence-related industries and introduced a new and heightened appreciation of the value of scientific research. On the President's orders, a roster of scientists was drawn up in Washington as early as June 1940—a far-sighted move that led eventually to the success of the Manhattan Project.

In Vatter's judgment, the social changes brought about by war-time policies were equally important, and most of them were harder to reverse. He shows how the war brought

about a redistribution of income downwards from the rich to the poor, which not only ensured a booming post-war market for houses and consumer goods but also went a long way towards closing the rifts in American civil society that had opened up in the years of the Depression. Under the pressure of war-time necessity, big business came to accept organized labour provided it operated under government supervision. This was no small task. The National Labor Relations Board ended up employing twice as many civil servants as the Anti-Trust division of the Department of Justice. Meanwhile, the GI Bill for post-war education and the health care for life offered to veterans paved the way for Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society. There was no going back, as after the First World War, and the changes were all for the better. Robert Hutchins, the celebrated post-war President of the University of Chicago predicted in 1944 that the GI Bill would turn American universities into "hobo jungles" inhabited by idle veterans fleeing unemployment. Instead, *Fortune* magazine reported later that in the class of 1949 the veterans had been the best, the most mature and the most self-disciplined college students in history.

About the only sharp criticism Vatter makes of war-time policy decisions was Washington's refusal to learn from Canadian experience to use volunteer housewives to police government price controls. This early example of what is now known among the foreign employees of American multinationals as the NIH (or Not Invented Here) syndrome in the American psyche is laid at the door of the then Deputy Administrator for Prices at the Office of Price Administration, a certain Kenneth Galbraith (himself a Canadian), who preferred to recruit a small army of government inspectors.

By the end, the non-American reader finds it easier to understand the enormous euphoria of United States policy-makers in the post-war years. The very success of war-time policies induced a tremendous optimism about the possibility of bringing about social and economic change on a global as well as a domestic scale. Sometimes, as Alan Milward observed in his *The Reconstruction of Western Europe 1945-51* (1984), it led to excessive optimism and an exaggerated perception by American policy-makers of the art of the possible, whether in hastening the demise of European empires or in weaning Europeans from their attachment to the nation-state. Appreciating that, in turn, makes it easier to understand the exaggerated pessimism of the last decade.

More than a generation separates Professor Vatter from young Robert A. Pollard, now an American diplomat, whose doctoral thesis was the basis of his book on United States policy-making towards Europe, the Soviet bloc, the Middle East and the Pacific after 1945. While Vatter is anxious to remind us of the achievements of the New Deal, Pollard's purpose in *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945-1950* is to correct the excesses of revisionist historians like Gabriel Kolko and Fred Block who had claimed that post-war policies were merely aimed at making the rest of the world safe and comfortable for American capitalists. The result is a fair-minded if somewhat right-of-centre reassessment of the evidence—a pessimism about the potentialities of constructive policy-making epitomized by the wide acclaim now being given in the United States to a book by Robert Keohane gloomily and mistakenly entitled *After Hegemony* (1984).

The Truman Administration was composed of enlightened and responsible men. Pollard asserts that it successfully integrated the Western economies in order to foster global (including American) prosperity, stabilize the balance of power and promote the national security of the United States. Pollard regards their achievements as one of the great success stories of the twentieth century—not just for the United States but for the world as a whole. The purpose was not, as the revisionists would have it, primarily to sustain the capitalist system. Nor was there a systematic attempt to suppress socialism in other countries—though there may have been (as Pollard comes close to admitting) a persistent preference for non-socialist governments and policies that gave freedom to market forces, or even in some cases to United

States-based oligopolies like the oil companies. In the Middle East, for example, he explains how Washington—in order to avoid having to go to the Congress—found ways to support Ibn Saud indirectly: first by getting the British to use their Lend-Lease for the purpose; and then by using ExIm Bank resources; and finally by allowing the oil companies to do it by deducting their oil royalties to host states from their tax liabilities to the federal government. Although formally approved by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) only in 1955, this neat tax dodge had been practised regularly since the early post-war years. Although in the long term, it probably weakened the oil companies' resistance to Opec demands, it did demonstrate once again the old axiom that states support the corporations when it suits their strategic and political interests, though at other times the corporations exert little influence on the policy-makers.

The conclusions take the author well beyond the dates in his title. Like many others, he recognizes that the structures and institutions established in the Truman era have been substantially weakened and that there is now increasing tension among the European and Japanese partners in the Western affluent alliance. He does not wholly subscribe to the consoling arguments of the prevailing post-hegemony school, which ascribes the erosion of these structures to the loss of American power. But nor is he ready to admit that some of it may be due to the increasing "domesticism" and unilateralism of American policy-making in recent years. All he will say, quoting David Calleo's *Imperious Economy* (1982) with approval, is that the main causes of the American economic malaise are probably internal, a combined product of fiscal irresponsibility and managerial complacency.

What is most useful about the book is the gathering together of the threads of American foreign and economic policy in all the important regions of the globe with the curious exception of Latin America. Four short pages

give insufficient attention to a continent which has always had a special power to debate the temperature of American political debates.

Esperanza Duran, on leave in London from the Colegio de Mexico, collected observations on the 1982-1985 financial crisis in Latin America for a Chatham House study group, some of which came from Latin American scholars and others from Americans and Europeans. In *Latin America and the World Recession* several related questions are addressed: the causes of the crisis—how much was it due to mistaken and outdated economic development strategies in the debtor countries and how much to the folly and ignorance of the creditor banks; whether it is therefore a temporary affair or a more deep-rooted, structural problem; and how it may be overcome. The conclusion is that the crisis cannot be treated as temporary. On the contrary, the *ad hoc* way in which it was, and is, being treated, is apt to make things worse in the long run and ensure that full recovery will be even more difficult. No instant panaceas are offered but the editor concedes that there were indeed grave errors in domestic economic management (and perhaps political conduct, too) by the debtors, as well as shocking bad judgment and irresponsible behaviour by the foreign bankers. Blame, in short, must be shared. And it is not only unfair, but in the long run also unwise, to let it seem that all the sacrifice and all the adjustment have to be made on the side of the debtors.

Loukas Tsoukalis's collection *Europe, America and the World Economy* is larger and much less homogeneous. Whereas the Latin Americans and the outsiders do not greatly differ from each other in their judgments of the issues, these contributions on the current state of United States-European conflicts on economic policy matters divide strikingly between those made by the Americans and those made by the Europeans. This disparity is the more evident because Tsoukalis throws each contributor's chapter to a small pack of assorted Americans and Europeans for discussion.

Going ahead in California

John Seelye

JEAN-NICOLAS PERLOT
Gold Seeker: Adventures of a Belgian argonaut
 Translated by Helen Harding Brentnor
 449pp. Yale University Press.
 030010963
ROBERT M. SENKEWICZ
Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco
 272pp. Stanford University Press. \$24.95.
 08047 12301

Having sensed early on that they were taking part in important events, many participants in the California gold-rush of the 1840s kept journals of their experiences or else set down their recollections later. These fascinating records seldom have any literary worth, but in this as well as other respects the account given by Jean-Nicolas Perlot of his experiences on the Pacific Slope is exceptional. Though actually written in 1897, when the author was in his early seventies, Perlot's *Vie et aventures d'un enfant de l'Ardenne* has the immediacy of a journal account. Perlot seems to have had a remarkable memory or else to have been working from a diary, and to this he added a vivid narrative style and a self-deprecating sense of humour.

Yet Perlot's book, published in a very small edition for relatives and friends, was unknown to historians until a copy was discovered in the Bancroft Library at the University of California by the late Helen Harding Brentnor, who translated it for this edition.

In 1850, Perlot, a Belgian, was living in Paris and working as a draper when news of the gold-rush inspired him to head for California. To help pay his way, he shipped as steward to a company of miners organized as *La Fortune*, which went bankrupt even as they were sailing to the New World. They learned the bad news on arrival in Monterey, but Perlot remained undaunted and headed overland with a greatly

reduced company toward the mines, managing to cross through some very formidable terrain to the gold fields. He was assisted during the next seven years not only by the engineering training he received in Paris but also by his skill with gun and compass. As Benjamin Franklin observed, success in America is not merely a matter of luck.

The variety of Perlot's experiences as a placer miner (sifting or washing alluvial dirt, not sinking shafts) contribute to the interest of his narrative. Enterprising, ingenious, a natural leader of men, he managed to keep ahead of his fellow miners in seeking out new gold-fields. Eventually his explorations took him into the magnificent Yosemite Valley, the culmination of his California experience. He was not the first white man into the Valley, but he did lay out the first road—to accommodate the waiting crowd of tourists, and the merchants eager to exploit them. He renders an unusually sympathetic account of the Yosemite Indians. Having first learned their language the better to learn where gold could be found, Perlot soon began to entertain Rousseauesque opinions of the Indians, appreciating the beauty of their nomadic life. The abiding irony is that, although he became an admirer of the Yosemite tribe, he was a primary instrument of the "civilized" transformation of both the Indians and the valley bearing their name.

When the placer fields of California became unprofitable, Perlot abandoned them upon hearing of new gold finds in Oregon. Arriving in Portland en route to the Interior, however, he remained in the city to become a pioneering and highly successful landscape gardener, relying on Belgian and French nationals for his labour pool and business contacts. "Le go-ahedisme", as a French scholar of the immigrant experience in California has observed, "n'est pas une qualité exclusivement américaine".

The ability to form voluntary associations is another American trait not exclusive to Americans. The company Perlot joined while in Paris was but one of many such, and his and his

immigrant companions contributed to the spirit of the gold-rush society—in terms both of simple fellowship and organizing complex communities. This impromptu, associational spirit, evinced as Lynch law, soon found its way downstream to San Francisco, where it erupted as the notorious and much studied Vigilante episode in California history. The organizers were mostly Whig businessmen with political ambitions, who used their control of the press to promote the issues of lawlessness and corruption so as to create an occasion for suppressing their Democratic rivals.

Until recently the Vigilantes enjoyed a post-humous reputation as heroic bringers of civilization to a raw and violent frontier town, thanks to, among other historical circumstances, their control of the newspapers which provided much of the evidence used by scholars. At this late stage, it would be difficult to imagine a new interpretation of the Vigilante phenomenon, and what Robert M. Senkewicz (who teaches history at the University of Santa Clara) chiefly provides is a sharpening of focus. His study emphasizes the anti-Catholic, anti-Irish aspect of the attacks on the Democratic party in San Francisco, with its roots in the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s. Though himself a Roman Catholic priest, Senkewicz avoids the temptation to sermonize, and his study is rigorous and fair-minded (he shows, for example, that the Catholic authorities were in their turn rigid and unbending).

The leaders of the Vigilantes were the anti-theses of Perlot, being manipulators of mobs not leaders of men, exploiters not adventurers, politicians not pathfinders. Yet Perlot's account, with its stories of magnanimity and generosity among the miners and its sympathy towards the Indians, contains considerable evidence that the sources of the troubles that broke out on San Francisco Bay were to be found along the streams and rivers feeding the San Joaquin. Even Perlot, the immigrant gold-miner born a Catholic, has imperfect sympathies concerning the Irish and the priests.

Film Studies from Princeton

Fascism in Film
The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931-1943
 Marcia Landy

Through her study of the narrative themes and strategies of Italian commercial sound films of the fascist era, Marcia Landy shows that cultural life under fascism was not monopolized by official propaganda. In their attempt to create a commercially successful cinema, Italian filmmakers imitated Hollywood film production and the style of indirect discourse through which Hollywood narratives communicated ideology. Professor Landy argues that the Italian commercial cinema of the 1930s and 1940s cannot be dismissed as trivial "white telephone" comedies or as mere propaganda. The ideological discourse of the films is as complicated and contradictory as the nature of Italian society under Mussolini. While encouraging consensus and incorporating dominant ideas of fascist society couched in seductive images, the films often included a critical and oppositional element.
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Christopher Faulkner

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Back to the perpetual centre

Jonathan Luxmoore

ALBERTO COLL
The Wisdom of Statecraft: Sir Herbert Butterfield and the philosophy of international politics.
173pp. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. \$25.
0822306077

"We can do worse than remember", Herbert Butterfield wrote in 1951, "a principle which both gives us a firm rock and leaves us the maximum elasticity for our minds: the principle. Hold to Christ and for the rest be totally uncommitted." For the greater part of his life it was the search for a creative synthesis between the absolute and the relative in human affairs which preoccupied him most; and it is a testimony to what he found in the course of that search that Alberto Coll should have chosen the title he has. *The Wisdom of Statecraft* gives us the first balanced and concise exposition of Butterfield's thought.

In his philosophy of international politics, Professor Coll argues, the wisdom of statecraft derived from three sources. The first of these was history, whose interpretation Butterfield regarded as a profound ethical issue. The work of the historian carried with it a prophetic power to affect the consciousness and behaviour of societies; so it was important that priority be given to the technical reconstruction of events over self-righteous moral judgments and all-encompassing teleologies. The study of history could never be relied upon to provide a manual of practical choices and policies. Rather, its value lay in the general body of ideas and accumulated experience which it imparted. If he was ready to transcend the narrow cultural perspectives of the present, the statesman could transpose the qualities and attributes of a historical mind into the realm of political decisions. The lessons of history were seldom learned; but they were there all the same for the statesman who had the patience and imagination to seek them out.

Butterfield's second source of wisdom, political theory, acknowledged the tragic truth of Acton's maxim, "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely", and recognized the moral requirements of an international order achieved by creative diplomacy. Conflicts of interest could never be abolished; but there could be general agreement on the forms and procedures by which these were to be managed. In the international order, Richelieu's "reason of state" could be made to coexist with Ranke's "reason of system" and the imperatives of freedom with the forces of necessity. Great statesmen in the mould of Caligula, Talleyrand, Metetrlich and Bismarck, exponents of the refined states system destroyed in 1914, had used their positions of strength to advance the welfare and security of their people while at the same time transforming traditional national rivalries into a relationship of mutual prosperity.

In his own day, Butterfield saw in the "tough détente" of Nixon and Kissinger the rudiments

of a workable international order based on a multiplicity of capitalist and socialist states. Even in the harsh ideological climate of the bipolar post-war world a peaceful equilibrium was possible. Yet it required leaders with a "broader vision of the future" and a willingness to take the "costly but nevertheless limited risks" to bring it about. Marxism had given to Soviet ideology an often reckless millenarian tone; yet it seemed to have instilled an awareness of the need for prudence and patience in the practical conduct of foreign policy which was not always paralleled in the West.

In this respect, Coll points out, Butterfield's third source of wisdom, Christianity, was a constant reminder both of the universality of sin and of the possibility of redemption. Christianity's appeal transcended the relativities of the historical process, and its implications were probed by Butterfield with a growing sense of urgency. If it had created a barrier against the utopianism of the Marxist revolutionary and the rationalism of the Whig, so also it had imparted a sense of moral responsibility and political realism, and an appreciation of the individual's inherent dignity and worth. And it was history's greatest paradox that this very combination had paved the way for freedom of conscience, religious tolerance and political pluralism: for the modern concepts of liberalism and internationalism. As Coll says:

The Augustinian separation of the City of God from the City of Man served a Christian historian such as Butterfield well. He was free to engage in the dispassionate study of history without the need to discover who were the good and the wicked, without the need to make absolute moral judgments on matters which after all were suitable only for relative evaluations. Moreover, the City of Man had its own wisdom and virtue which, though insufficient to make men wise unto eternal salvation, had their own proper place in the scheme of divine Providence. Therefore, a Christian historian could study the intricate workings of politics, the detailed rules of the grammar of power, and speculate on the ways in which a semblance of temporary order and civility might be brought into the restless course of international politics.

Man was by nature incapable of perfect virtue. But there were degrees of ethical integrity to which he could aspire. Coercion and reconciliation in the right measure, Butterfield believed, could preserve the "glasslike, fragile edifice of civilization atop the inherently un-

stable volcano of human passions, irrationality and disorder". It was beyond the power of Man to progress towards a permanent transformation of the political order – and Butterfield saw the development of nuclear weapons as God's judgment upon a century which had impatiently arrogated such a power to itself. But it was nevertheless the vitality of human beings, with their genius for experimentation and adaptation, which lay at the "genesis of historical events". Man's very inability to escape from his tragic predicaments was also a guarantee of his freedom from the ideas and institutions of the past. Those living now were "a part of the historical process . . . not pioneers merely, but also passengers in the movement of things".

In the work of the Church in history, then, Butterfield found "a perpetual centre, from which the whole process can be for ever starting again". If the decline in the present century of Christianity's cultural and political predominance as a "bond of tribe" had removed an essential bulwark against dehumanizing forces, so the end of its association with social consensus and state power had enabled it to recover its spiritual integrity. When the Promethean aberrations of Western individualism and Marxist collectivism had succumbed to their contradictions – as they surely would – Butterfield believed that religion would regain its influence and appeal.

At the heart of his philosophy lay a perpetual dilemma between the immanent and the transcendent, the relative and the absolute. For all his sagacity and erudition, it was a dilemma which Butterfield by his own admission never fully resolved. His attempts to do so placed him beyond the conventional categories and were often misunderstood as a result. Against the Whig "history of liberty" he was accused of imposing a counter-dogma of relativism. In reality Butterfield was never a relativist. He cautioned historians against making absolute moral judgments; yet he believed at the same time that certain moral judgments were inevitable. Nor, one suspects, would he have been quite as drawn by Acton's dictum, "when you perceive a truth look for a balancing truth", as Coll, sometimes in a rather contradictory way, appears to suggest. To a Christian historian, there would always be absolute truths – small

in number perhaps, but absolute none the less. Yet it was also perfectly possible to accept with sympathetic understanding the relative manner in which these had been applied within an evolving secular moral code in particular historical circumstances.

Later in his life, as George Watson recalls in his foreword, Butterfield was increasingly attracted to the spiritual values of Catholicism. For in these he discerned a workable synthesis between the sovereign will of God and the free will of Man, between absolute Christian values and their relative though well-intended application by past generations.

As readers of Coll's book will readily detect, there were certain assumptions in Butterfield's philosophy of international politics which cannot be accepted without careful reservation. It underestimated the systemic imbalances between the attributes and capabilities of modern totalitarian and liberal democratic societies. It ignored the fact that unspoken agreements over the need for international order could genuinely break down, especially when military and ideological expansion became not simply a "tendency" of power, as Acton inferred, but a necessity for preserving the putative legitimacy of self-imposed Marxist élites. It failed to account for the confusion over the definition and management of "national interests" which was certain to follow when the interests of state and nation diverged, as they did in many non-democratic countries, and when political contests for the support of public opinion in the West prevented any firm consensus.

In a more general way, however, Butterfield's was a sobering therapy for a modern society saturated with political stereotypes and ideological nostrums, and often with a rootless and contradictory understanding of statecraft. Coll's attempts to draw practical lessons from Butterfield's observations are too selective to have much value. His haphazard critique of modern American "conservatives", for example, is one weakness in an otherwise skilful – and wisely deferential – exposition. But these are slight faults, and we are left with a scholarly and elegantly written book, which is the most successful attempt thus far to give renewed order and purpose to Butterfield's significant and complex intellectual achievements.

Conservative Party policies in the 1920s. Charles Townsend demonstrates that the RAF's imperial "policing" activities (ie, the bombing of troublesome tribesmen in East Africa, the Middle East and on the North-West Frontier) between the wars played an even greater part than has so far been apparent in the story of the development of Second World War-style terror bombing. Concerning the origins of that war, Paul Kennedy gently but firmly reminds us that, of course, "profound forces" were at work as well as short-term causes and – so far as they were different – mere accidents; and proves by textual exegesis that Taylor knows it, however much his love of historiographical trouble-making compels him to pretend that he doesn't.

Three of the essays bear as much or more on the post-war period. Eric Hobsbawm argues that the Communist parties of Europe before and just after the war were not actually as abjectly subservient to "the Moscow line" as their critics alleged, and as the public language of Kremlin and Comintern suggested they should be. William Roger Louis ingeniously shows how, in the shedding of Britain's imperial burdens and responsibilities, there is not only superficial resemblance, but integral connection and explanatory matter in the parallel stories of the partitions of Palestine and India. And Kathleen Burk documents copiously the part that the Marshall Plan played in the familiar story of how Britain's role in the post-war world was enabled to be a globally grander one than at first seemed possible because of the usefulness Britain acquired in American eyes as an agent and collaborator in the economic and military containment of "world communist aggression".

That leaves three. Eva Haraszti outlines the life and ideas of the Hungarian socialist patriot and long-term political exile, Michael Karolyi

– the particular justification for which here is that he was a friend of Taylor's through the fifteen years preceding his death in 1955. Michael Foot obviously enjoyed writing the friendly character sketch of the honorand which opens the collection and which gives him the chance incidentally to engage in some fraternal political polemics. In a class of its own for style, entertainment and suggestiveness is John Keegan's essay on how the military instinct, adept and borrow from among their own co-professional kind those "traditions" which matter so much in their closed minds and circles. The essay has nothing in particular to do with the mainstream historical matters to which the book is otherwise devoted, but it is a marvellous piece of military-historical sociology in its own right and full of curious and exhilarating learning following, for example, the bagpipes from Culloden to Kuwait, and explaining why the 1st Royal Scots take pride in their claimed connection with Calvary.

Macmillan have recently published *Atlas of Global Strategy: War and peace in the nuclear age* by Lawrence Freedman, Professor of War Studies at King's College, London (192pp. £14.95. 0 333 38416 4), which examines East-West relations since 1945 in a manner intended for the general reader. Included in the book are chapters on "The Nuclear Arms Race" and "Warfare since 1945". In his final chapter, Freedman concludes that "In the end it is prudent statesmanship upon which we must rely if the most awesome of the many engines of war that we have described are not to be set in motion, should the most severe of all the disputes that we have encountered erupt into violence". The text is heavily illustrated with photographs, diagrams and maps and is supplemented with a chapter by chapter guide to further reading.

Poetry in public

Oswyn Murray

TONY HARRISON
Dramatic Verse 1973-1985
448pp. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe. £20.
0906427819

Every generation or so the rebirth of poetic drama is proclaimed; Tony Harrison (like myself) is just old enough to remember the excitement of the last renaissance, associated with the names of T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. The plays of that period are not much revived; even in the case of Eliot they remain a minor part of a major poet's work. They seem to belong to an alien culture, to be the last fling of an even earlier renaissance in the Edwardian age, when verse drama was a major industry, and the verse translations of Gilbert Murray packed the West End theatres.

It is difficult to explain the fascination of such a generation of quiet-voiced poets with the theatre. The oddest thing is that it was Eliot's main aim in preparing for the stage to reduce the poetic element in verse and diction, "to find a rhythm close to contemporary speech, in which the stresses could be made to come wherever we should naturally put them, in uttering the particular phrase on the particular occasion"; it was important that passages should not call "too much attention to themselves as poetry". But within a few years other dramatists as different as Beckett, Osborne and Pinter, writing in prose, were exploring theatrical styles of rhetoric more obviously poetic than anything in Eliot. Now it looks more as if poetry had lost its way, and handed over to prose the task of exploring a form of discourse which would transcend the limits of ordinary language. For that is surely the reason why we should want poets to write for the theatre, whether they write in poetry or prose.

Tony Harrison is today our leading theatrical poet; and at first sight his work might seem to owe nothing to this earlier period of poetic activity. Yet there is I think a sense of continuity in conscious opposition: Eliot himself began his interest in the theatre with a violent attack on Gilbert Murray's style of translating ("Euripides and Professor Murray", in 1920); and Harrison shares Eliot's central preoccupations, with poetic diction, with the creation of atmosphere, and with the primacy of classical Greek models.

Much of Harrison's work is of course what we would conventionally call translation, though he himself prefers the term "adaptation"; the most interesting consequence of this publication of virtually all his dramatic verse apart from *The Mysteries* is the way that it shows how Harrison has used the creative potential of this process. In his hands the text takes on something of the flexibility of myth in the hands of the Greek tragedians; and even when the translation is as exact as one could wish, it achieves an independent life of its own which can scarcely be subsumed under the normal conception of translation. Here is that excellent poetic craftsman and disciple of Eliot, Louis MacNeice, rendering a chorus of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*:

But the money-changer War, changer of bodies,
Holding his balance in the battle
Home from Troy refined by fire
Sends back to friends the dust
That is heavy with tears, stowing
A man's worth of ashes
In an easily handled jar.
And they wait speaking well of the man how that one
Was expert in battle, and one fell well in the
carnage –

But for another man's wife.
Muffled and muttered words;
And resentful grief creeps up against the sons
Of Atrous and their cause.
But others there by the wall
Entombed in Trojan ground
Lie, handsome of limb,
Holding and hidden in enemy soil.

And here is Tony Harrison:

Geldahk Ares god of War
broker of men's bodies
murder of living flesh
corpse-trafficker: that god is –

give to WAR your men's fleshgold
and what are your returns?
kings of gold clinker packed
in army-issue urns

wives mothers sisters each one scans
the dogtags on the amphorae

which grey ashes are my man's?
they sift the jumbled names and cry:

my husband sacrificed his life

my brother's a battle-martyr

aye, for someone else's wife –

Helen, whore of Sparta!

whisper, mutter belly-aching
the people's beef and bile: this war's
been Agamemnon's our clanchief's making,
the sons of Atrous and their "cause".

Where's my father husband boy?
where do all our loved ones lie?
six feet under near the Troy
they died to occupy . . .

Harrison's version is scarcely less accurate, but it is far more direct; more importantly it is poetry for performance, not for reading. It is hard to see the well-mannered version of MacNeice having the stage success that Harrison achieved in the National Theatre production. Harrison's strength is that he is genuinely a poet of the theatre, not a poet attempting to write for the theatre.

He also differs from the previous generation in his concern for the relation between theatre and music. Music is central to his idea of performance, and one feels more than the usual sense of frustration in attempting to evaluate the written word outside this intended context. Presumably tapes, even videotapes, exist in the archives of the National Theatre and the BBC; but when a writer offers for much of his work subtitles like "a music drama", "a sex-war opera" or "a rhythmic libretto", and when he works with composers like Harrison Birtwistle, Dominic Muldowney and Jacob Druckman, it seems a pity that the publication of his words cannot be combined with at least a selection of their performance on tape. For performance, not the written word, is the key to Harrison's art.

His dramatic career extends over the whole period of his activity as a poet; indeed, until the publication of his *Selected Poems* in Penguin in 1984, he was more widely known as a playwright. The earliest play here reprinted is his version of *The Misanthrope* for the National Theatre in 1973: it must have been the first successful use of rhyming couplets on the stage for well over a century; the pace and wit of the original are marvellously recreated through the way that the conventions of the rhyming couplet build up tensions and expectations. And the formality of the stylistic constraints in turn imposes a formality of representation, and recreates for us precisely that lifestyle of conventions which the hero Alceste so vigorously opposes.

In *Phaedra Britannica* (1975), a close adaptation, in rhyming iambic couplets, of Racine's play, the action is reset in the British Raj before the Mutiny. By a simple device of change of situation Harrison revives all the tensions present in Racine. The formality of the couplet form offsets the passionate and uncontrollable emotions that are expressed through it, just as the controlled coolness of Racine's language heightened the violence of the original; but it also seems right for its new context, as characters struggle to express thoughts and feelings through the conventions of colonial English life. The new setting is also important for the religious meaning of the play; for it allows us to believe in the influence of the gods of India on the action, from the betrayal of the Memabhi's mother by lust to the final curse of the Governor, which brings forth Siva's monster to stampee his son's polo ponies and drag him to his death. When at the end the Governor and Lillamani are left alone, the weight of Indian religion and the dread of the mixing of races shine through his final words:

Your family, now mine, have borne the cost
of crossing certain bounds best left uncrossed.
Now try to ford, though times force us apart,
those frontiers of blood into my heart.

When it was first produced in 1981, I described *The Oresteia* as "surely the best acting translation of Aeschylus ever written". It gives the impression of catching every image and every nuance of meaning that is dramatically

significant, while recreating Aeschylus' traditional grandeur and sonority" (*TLS*, December 11, 1981). Rereading the text after the memory of that magnificent theatrical experience has faded a little, it is easy to see how closely Harrison's achievement is related to his technical skills as a writer of poetry. On this occasion he abandons rhyme (except in certain choruses) in order to appeal to a far older tradition of English verse. He uses a variety of strongly stressed and regular metres often based on the dactyl or anapest, to create a poetry of pace and of menace. The chief characteristic of his line is a heavy caesura at its centre, which recalls the rhythm of Anglo-

Saxon verse, or of the Psalms in the Authorized Version. This allusion to the origins of English poetry is reinforced by his very strong emphasis on alliteration and assonance, and by his use of a vocabulary rich in gutturals and labials:

Coerced into keening by Queen Clytemnestra
for King Agamemnon as if for our bloodkin
we carry these ghost-sops out to his gavemound.
Lashed out to lament the lost lord of Argos
we Trojans trench flesh ruts into our faces.
There's no need to coerce us, we cry anyway.

The language too points to our own remote past – of tomb-cairn, clanchief and bloodguilt. Instead of gods and goddesses we have "Hera,

Bluffers

1

We reach the stile together. They give way.
Their eyes sink on behind us and their feet
Shift. They say
Nothing. (Why does Angus have to greet
Everybody? It's a precept: I
Greet everybody.) And he asks, *How long
To the bay, d'you think?*

– Two hours. It's not a lie

Blurring from them, but they know they're wrong:
Some people make you say things you don't mean.
Angus will later call them *Bloody louts!*
And I'll keep quiet to avoid a scene –
Pose, against his certainties, my doubts,
Hearing, as they bluff their way to bars,
Their easy conversation: women, cars . . .

2: The Tennyson Memorial, Tennyson Down, Isle of Wight

Like clinging to Leviathan up here!
She shouts.

– One worse than Milton's fisherman
On Norway foam!

Angus thinks we're queer.
*Harpoon, she points, broken off – the Tennyson
Memorial!*

Last stab for versel
The gale

Unfixes everything: tiny storms,
Miles off, where this huge island's tail-flukes flail,
Wreck ships; on Shingles Bank the ebb-tide forms
A garden of white blooms.

And as we squat

By Tennyson's Memorial, she says,
Sheltered now and serious, *I cannot
Imagine writers getting so much praise
Ever again.*

Angus is chatting to
A tripper. *Tennyson*, he's saying.

– Who?

3

*I'm a commercial man. I measure man
By these:* he slaps a pound-note on the table.
I am pissed on Angus's yacht on Angus's wine.
My hand slips to the bookrack. I say, *Able
To put a price on these then, are you?* 'Budd-
enbrooks' and 'Howards End' slap back my slick
Riposte. *Books measure men, I growl.*


A good

Discussion leaves me, as they say, 'sick
At heart'. I hated, when a child,
My sisters' easy rows; and aimed to slip
Out bicycling, a self-made hero, wild
Beyond words, beyond passion.

Let's get ship-

shape, Angus says. *The wind has eased. We'll move.*
My stomach lifts at this vector of love.

JONATHAN TAYLOR



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high she-god and Zeus, the high he-god". Where rhyme is used, the effect is powerful, as in the passage quoted above, or:

LEMNOSI Its very name is vile
Clytemnestra should have been
of that murderous and manless iste
the killer queen

Queen of women who wield knives
or slaughtered husband's sword.
The Lemnos husband-killing wives.
LEMNOS – name to be abhorred.

There is in fact something almost Byronic in the speed, rhythmic vigour and fluency of Harrison's verse, and in his delight in it:

This is my male, a poor long-suffering hack,
with iambic front legs and trochaic back.

Backwards or forwards, he'll take you home
both ways together like a palindrome.
(Palladas 34)

Without their music, others of Harrison's works are less easy to judge. For instance, a collaboration with Birtwistle produced *Van Tan Tetters* for BBC Television, described as "a mechanical pastoral" with revolving hill and two choruses of black- and white-faced sheep: after various mishaps the opera is finally due for first performance this August on the South Bank and ITV. Seeing (and hearing) may induce believing, but on the printed page it doesn't sound as if it would have appealed to the author's father:

Sorry, dad, you won't get that quatrain
(I'd like to be the poet my father reads!)
It's all from you once saying on the train
how most of England's thubarb came from Leeds.

So he wrote in his poetic epistle on translating Smetana's *Bartered Bride* for the New York Met (also included in this volume). But this is just an extreme example of a tension which runs through all of Harrison's work, and marks him out as belonging to a particular generation. Aggressive pride in his working-class origins is combined with a delight in exploring even the most obscure byways of European culture: how many people have heard of Palladas, the Alexandrian schoolteacher in the late Roman empire, whose epigrams Harrison so brilliantly translated?

The most entertaining expression of this conflict is Harrison's homage to his old school, Leeds Granular School. *The Big H*, with music by Dominic Muldowney, was first shown on BBC Television on Boxing Day, 1984; three schoolteachers act the part of a modern Herod instilling in their classes the duty of massacring innocents, and the importance of not dropping altches; as each hero returns from his task, the teacher intones:

The title I hereby award to thee
is Grand Child Eliminator G.C.E.

The dog Latin and the schoolboy jokes come thick and fast, and the puns are truly awful:

In these days of freedom the flogger and flesh-render
can also be a Herod of the feminine gender.

If you think mass-murder is monopolised by men
watch how this King Herod does it, then think again.

HISTORY is HERstory, girls, now mark this well
you too might be recruited into Herod's PREL.

(The PREL is Herod's hit squad, named acronymically from the school motto, *pro rege et lege*.) It must all have been great fun for the schoolkids involved. I find it also an intensely nostalgic piece; for it looks back to the only period when it might be said that England had a shared culture and a shared education; though they still teach Latin at Leeds Grammar School, it no longer takes little Tony Harrison who drop their altches, for it is a private school.

Harrison's most ambitious work to date is *Medea: a sex-war opera* with music by Jacob Druckman; commissioned by the New York Met and finished last year, it does not seem to have been performed yet. But it involves a major step forward in his art. It is a formal opera; there is, for instance, what is clearly a chorus sung by the Argonauts; and there is a (poetically) haunting aria for Butes, reluctant voyager:

O moon, whose bees are stars
send out your swarming tonight
and on this sea that scarcely sleeps
coax your hidden light.

The plot derives from the myth, conceived as all its versions; it is framed in Greek and Latin passages from Euripides to Hosiudius Geta (second century AD) and the Scottish Renaissance Latinist, Buchanan. The story begins with the Argonauts on Lemnos, and moves to Colchis for the winning of the golden fleece, and the meeting of Jason and Medea. Their wedding at the end of the act is repeated for Jason and Creusa at the start of the next act, which provokes the dreadful revenge of Medea on her rival. The final section explains why this is a sex-war opera. Harrison has already protested at the attitude of opera to women:

Tosca, Carmen, Butterfly
it seems all women do is die
in music drama.
A woman is what men desert;
in opera (as in life!) men hurt
and harm her.

Now he takes up a theme he had explored earlier in the *Oresteia*, the conflict between the male and female principles:

Light cakes, thin ale

Bernard O'Donoghue

WENDY COPE
Making Cocoa for Kingsley Amis
69pp. Faber. £7.95.
0571 139779

The title-poem of Wendy Cope's first collection is characteristic of its author in disclaiming much purport:

It was a dream I had last week
And some kind of record seemed vital.
I knew it wouldn't be much of a poem
But I love the title.

But if the title does hold an implication, it might be paraphrased "offering something soothing to the conservative formalist", which describes the volume well enough to seem more than coincidence. Anti-modernist, blimpish grousing about poetry that doesn't rhyme or scan and is difficult to understand threatens to be the new consensus; this amusing book, which you can read from cover to cover, tum-ti-tum, in a very pleasant hour, could be seen as the manifesto of this view, couched in terms of parody.

There is no doubting Cope's accomplishment in her parodies of other writers ("perhaps the most accomplished parodist since Beer-bohm", the blurb claims, not especially enticingly). The best are the pastiches of Eliot and of contemporary poets: the synoptic

As the sex-war's still being fought
which sex does a myth support
you should be asking.
What male propaganda lurks
behind most operatic works
that music's masking?

Medea did not kill her children; they were stoned by the men of Corinth. And the opera ends with a father, Hercules, murdering his children.

The libretto is totally professional, and no longer rests on translation or even adaptation: the basis of the act of recreation is no longer the text, but the myth. All the various techniques that he has learned over the last twelve years in the theatre are brought into play. One hopes and expects that the music will live up to this superb libretto.

Harrison's poetry has always been public poetry, immediately accessible and directed at an audience rather than at the solitary reader. His chief weakness as a poet, that he lacks the ability to speak in a private voice, is in the theatre his greatest strength: unlike Eliot, his

"Waste Land Limericks" would win any *New Statesman* competition. This is section five:

No water. Dry rocks and dry throats.
Then thunder, a shower of quotes
From the Sanskrit and Dante.
Da. Danyata. Shanthi.
I hope you'll make sense of the notes.

The Marian "The Lavatory Attendant" could rank with its prototypes, as a good parody should, and the Heaneyesque "Usquebaugh" has a memorable evocation of the effects of whiskey:

The pie-eyed, slug-witted slump
Into soused oblivion.

Accomplished as the best of them are, though, most remain redolent of school magazine competitions – and not always of the winners: "Let me not to the marriage of true swine / Admit impediments" isn't good enough, and this is true of the whole sequence from which it comes, "From Strugnell's Sonnets". This series follows another modern fashion in the employment of a persona, Jake (or, according to the blurb, Jason) Strugnell. In "Mr Strugnell", he is identified as the next occupant of Larkin's Mr Bleaney's room: that is, Larkin. It seems to me that a heavy price is paid for the hubris, risked for a small joke:

"He didn't seem the sort for being free
With girls or going out and having fun.
He had a funny turn in 'sixty-three

natural habitat is the public arena. That is also why he understands so well the classical tradition in the theatre: it is not just an accident of his education. For the Greeks, poetry was a public act, and therefore belonged in the theatre, where the spoken word fused with religious ritual, dance and music to extend the boundaries of action and speech towards the unknown. In the *Oresteia*, Tony Harrison and Peter Hall showed their understanding of the place of ritual in the theatre; and Harrison has always seemed close to the ancient tragedians in his acceptance that poetry is part of this ritual context. Like them he belongs to a verbal not a written culture: the word is the spoken word. That is why he finds his natural home in the theatre, and that is why this book is no more than the verbal notation for past and future performances. At the start of his *Oresteia* he places an author's note: "This text is written to be performed, a rhythmic libretto for masks, music, and an all-male company." That is no mere antiquarian homage to Aeschylus, but a statement of poetic principle.

And ran round shouting 'Yippeel It's begun'.

We get the reference to when sexual intercourse began (too late for him), but the summoning of Larkin's ghost at his is dangerous here, reminding us that the best satirists can be funny and serious at the same time.

The sonnets and villanelles are assured (the latter is a constricting form, over-used in this book), but the weight of the total enterprise is doubtful. There are several poems about the loss of a prized lover, the recovery of whom "Manifesto" claims as the *raison d'être* of the whole volume. And, in an entirely different register, there is a group of three lucid, compassionate poems: "On Finding an Old Photograph", "At 3a.m." and the perfect "Tich Miller". These range beyond the accomplished light verse of the rest, and – like the parallel of Larkin – they draw attention to its limitations.

Such virtuous criticism Cope might characterize, as in "Some People": "There's nothing wrong with being innocent or high-minded." Certainly there is room for Cope's cakes and ale, for jokes that make you laugh as you read, and her intelligent wit is a pleasant rejoinder to the more vatic pretensions of the lyric poem to high Art. There are some palpable hits, on Eliot and Hill, for example. But by the end it seems rather a thin gruel. To attempt to refill Heaney's glass of *ulce beatia* will always be a higher ambition than to warm up Amis's cocoa.

crats sent out to curb his excesses are nicely differentiated. Mostyn Owen waxes lyrical over Table Mountain, while William Hogge grumbles, "there are no sampans here, no dhows, / or boys diving for money / . . . This is laundry water, for all the light it / gives back to the eye." It is Hogge who justifies the Sand River Convention with the thought, "Why should we worry? Whoever wins will end up / Englishmen."

That prophecy overlooks the Boers' enduring hatred ("dreaming / of frying Englishmen basted with Zulu fat"), and the eventual realization, succinctly expressed in *Kruger's Alp*, that "if you couldn't out-gun the English, you could out-vote the bastards" – that a majority of the white minority could in time dominate Southern Africa through the ballot box.

But for how long? Mr Silvero sounds tired as he contemplates the future: "Dawn or Armageddon, / it's all the same to me. A series of strategic halts / called progress, / a long road between water-holes, / A long trek into winter."

As the recent Radio 3 production of *Englishmen*, featuring Janet Suzman and Nigel Hawthorne, showed, Hope's poetry is capable of a wide range of effects, and admirably suited to the speaking voice. The poem marks a new and exciting departure for this extremely versatile writer.

How Western is Japan?

Frank Tuohy

ALAN BOOTH
The Roads to Sata: A two thousand mile walk through Japan
281pp. Viking. £10.95.
0670 807761
JOHN LOWE
Into Japan
214pp. John Murray. £10.95.
07195 42383
MORTON and LUCIA WHITE
Journeys to the Japanese 1952-1979
173pp. University of British Columbia Press.
£24.95.
07748 02316

The three books under review differ completely in their approach but all of them might be said to be answering the same unspoken question: How Western is Japan? For foreign observers, this is still a matter of some fascination: they see the signs of what they regard as western civilization all around them, and they wish to know how far the Japanese people they meet have adapted themselves to it.

It seems to be uncertain whether, today, this sort of fascination is reciprocated. Not only the economic relationships between East and West have changed. Though apparently still concerned about what foreigners think of their country, the Japanese see little reason to be interested in the rest of the world in a more than superficial way. The technology, wherever it came from, is all (with the notable exception of the Pill) available at home. Fashions come and go, like Royal or Presidential visits. Meanwhile a frequently quoted statistic informs us that 70 per cent of Japanese would prefer not to have anything to do with foreigners. This figure is somehow more distressing to Americans than to Europeans – but if there is a conflict between American "friendliness" and Japanese "reserve", perhaps neither of these qualities is quite what it seems.

Alan Booth has lived in Japan for a number of years, but *The Roads to Sata* deals with only a short period, the time taken on his 2,000-mile walk from Soya, the north cape, to Sata in the extreme south. When it came out in Tokyo, the

book caused some adverse comment, largely due to a misinterpretation of the writer's purpose. His intention was not to hand out compliments, but rather to give an account of a complete experience. Anyone planning a visit and requiring a just, well-tempered account of Japan today would do better to avoid this book, and choose instead John Lowe's *Into Japan*.

Lowe divides the country into ten areas, devoting a chapter to each one. This is not a scheme which works out in practice, for the pleasures of tourism in such a heavily industrialized country are severely limited, and in any case the natives in their millions will be there ahead of you. The second part of each of his chapters turns into a general commentary on Japanese business, universities, religious groups, daily living and social life. On all these he has excellent things to say, writing with an authority and justice based on personal knowledge. His final sentence, perhaps a touch more pessimistic than what has gone before, is: "It would seem that the digestive powers of Japanese society can absorb everything foreign except foreigners."

Booth would certainly agree with this, although, walking down the coast-line facing towards Siberia across the Sea of Japan, he was in an area where foreigners are rarely seen. Fluent in the language, well informed and disabused, he is in the fine tradition of hard-to-please travellers like Norman Douglas, Evelyn Waugh and V. S. Naipaul. A sharp eye and a good memory for detail (achieved, he confesses, with the help of a pocket tape-recorder) give an astonishing immediacy to his account of incidents about which his knowledge of Japan must have made him well accustomed. He would have known that people who behave in unexpected ways cause immoderate disturbance, that conversation circles around a limited number of received ideas, that much communication is phatic or entirely non-verbal. Yet it is his extensive use of dialogue which is one of the chief delights – dialogue which for once doesn't have to be reported in funny-foreigners' English, but has a *naïf*, rueful quality which exactly catches the feel of such encounters. Nevertheless, writers, like television crews, are a part of the situation they report,

and perhaps some part of the adverse reactions he encountered was due to his physical appearance after some weeks on the road.

Much friendliness was balanced by a number of untoward incidents: refusal to understand because foreigners can't speak Japanese, rejection by innkeepers, encounters with drunks and jeering children, which indicated that, in the national mind, the centuries of isolation still persist. Booth ends his journey and his book with a conversation with an old man who announces triumphantly, "You will never understand Japan."

This ambition did not occur to Morton and Lucia White, who went to Japan four times, starting in 1952, to tell the Japanese about American philosophy – what particular philosophy is not precisely stated. Perhaps it was that of John Dewey, whose ideas of "learning through doing" were much pushed under the American Occupation – and presumably later dropped: like everywhere else, Japan has a crisis in education, but illiteracy and innumeratecy form no part of it. *Journeys to the Japanese 1952-1979* is really a series of thank-you letters to the grateful people who looked after the Whites. It is heavy going, since this estimable couple have not crossed the barrier that separates those who can write from those who merely write things down.

From the beginning, still under the Occupation, when "we American professors and wives clung to our shoes as a symbol of our accustomed lives" (one wonders if the *tsammi* was thrown out after they stood on it), they tend to equate increasing prosperity with becoming more "like us". Any non-American influence is considered extraordinary. The study of Hegel is treated as a German imposition, whereas others have told us that his ideas were adopted because they fitted in with Japanese beliefs at the time. Someone who speaks with a British accent excites comment: it was, we learn, "acquired while listening to the lectures of a young Oxford poet whose name, we think, was 'Thwaite'". The endless hospitality they attribute to friendliness, instead of the painful obligation it often must have been.

And yet one is convinced that the Whites left a good impression behind them, though maybe it was only an impression. As far as I know,



Bronze statue of a girl putting her hair up, by Paul Troubetzkoy, 1866-1933(?). Born in Italy, Troubetzkoy worked in the United States where he became known for his portrait statues of Red Indians. This bronze will be offered for sale at Christie's, South Kensington, on June 10.

nobody has yet written a readable account of that benign yet peculiar period of the American Occupation and its aftermath. But, reading the Whites, one comes to know something of what it was like.

Down in old Hong Kong, and elsewhere

Richard Harris

H. J. LETHBRIDGE (Editor)
Carl Crow's Handbook for China
390pp. Paperback. £7.50.
019 5837886
All About Shanghai: A standard guidebook
225pp. Paperback. £4.95.
019 5815947
The Hong Kong Guide 1893
137pp. Paperback. £4.50.
019 5815033
J. A. TURNER
Kwang Tung or Five Years in South China
With an introduction by H. J. Lethbridge
194pp. Paperback. £4.50.
019 5815017
Oxford University Press.

By the end of the nineteenth century China became an attraction to the exploring traveller. The suppression of the Boxers had finally repressed China's violent xenophobia. Inland, and all down the coast, treaty ports were foreign-built and administered, or provided with consular posts offering exceptional protection to foreigners. Steamships were by then upping themselves into liners; hotels built and managed by Europeans kept insanitary China at bay. So guides were needed for the curious visitors. These four reproductions in Oxford paperbacks are a pleasant exercise in nostalgia, including as they do all the original illustrations, tipped-in maps, and a scattering of art-deco-flavoured advertisements.

The most serious and well-informed is Carl Crow's survey of all China – seen from Shanghai, admittedly, but comprehensive. First published before the First World War, this edition was of 1933, by which time Shanghai's character was in full bloom, though jolted by troubles in 1925 and by the threat of Japanese aggression in 1932. By contrast,

Peking was already a decaying imperial city – brambles were spreading on its crumbling walls – though it offered a fistful of evocatively named hotels: Grand Hotel de Pekin, Grand Hotel des Wagons-Lits, du Nord, Central, Astor and Palace.

Crow was an American journalist, mastering information about China from the limited sources then available. Even today's tourists might do worse than take this book with them. Amid the coverage of every province and provincial capital the reader will come across small legacies from treaty port days that have survived in the new China: the British, with their Indian experience, picked out hill-stations or founded summer resorts wherever China's long and mostly unrewarding coastline offered suitable beaches backed by wooded hills and then furnished them with hotels and villas. Nowadays on such heights or by sandy beaches, the Chinese Communist Party is happy to hold its conferences.

The *Hong Kong Guide 1893* and *All About Shanghai* are less substantial period pieces, at best dusted-down corners of nostalgia. The work of a dutiful government servant, the Hong Kong guide is naturally stuffy, written it would seem in free time: office hours ten to four, "with an interruption for a long tiffin at noon". When the British had taken over in 1841 – a year before the Treaty of Nanking formally inserted this new jewel in Queen Victoria's newly assumed crown – there were about 4,000 Chinese inhabitants, fishermen and farmers; by 1891 the census found 8,545 Europeans and Americans and 210,995 Chinese (all but a handful of whom were classed as "natives").

Fifty years of history are here celebrated with bubbling imperial pride. Thus successive blows which brought the Chinese to heel are complacently set down in one case "a few broadsides" and the enemy fled up the coast at

Amoy, Captain Bourchier "directed his batteries for nearly two hours with tremendous effect"; at Chusan, the island in the Yangtze estuary favoured by some as an alternative base to Hong Kong, British men-of-war opened their broadsides on the town and "made sad havoc in a very short time".

We are led past a procession of governors, each worth a comment: at one extreme, Sir Hercules Robinson's rule in the 1860s was "remarkable for extraordinary progress", whereas, disastrously, Sir John Pope Hennessy in 1877 "soon began to espouse the cause of the natives", finding himself in no time socially isolated. Despite the completion of the Peak Tramway in 1888, Hong Kong had little to offer the visitor; no mention in the guide, H. J. Lethbridge notes, even of Chinese food or of antique dealers.

The Shanghai guide of 1934 blows the confident salesman's trumpet. Its evidently American author presents a "Whoopie" city of "high hats and low necks; long tails and short knickerbockers; inebriated and slumming puritans". The Casanova, Canidrome, Palais Majestic and Ambassador advertise their cabarets with never fewer than one hundred dance hostesses instantly available – most of them white Russians. Pidgin English gets a mention, as also in Crow's compendium, though Crow is rather more conscious of how insulting the use of this lingo would be to an educated Chinese. To "lose face", Crow reminds us, is a pidgin, not a Chinese expression. Certainly life could be very agreeable for most of the business community and for the soldiers stationed there to defend them if necessary. But while Shanghai grew as a major Chinese centre of publishing, theatre, film-making and urgent political debate, the foreigners' Shanghai had no such intellectual content; if a literary call to fame is collected, it may be for Noël Coward who, recovering from flu in a Shanghai hotel in January 1933, wrote the following poem:

ary 1930, rattled off the script of *Private Lives* in four days.

In all three of these guides the presence of missionaries gets a mention; fishers of men, they were able after 1860 to penetrate China's interior, where a vast haul could be brought in if only the nets were skillfully cast. J. A. Turner, the Wesleyan missionary who arrived in 1886, may have shared such hopes, and have seen Chinese as "heathen" who worshipped "idols", but he must have abandoned such views when he left five years later, never to return. His account of the China he experienced in up-country Kwangtung province is singularly unprejudiced, alert, curious and vividly described.

He had difficulties of course. Bandits and burglars were to be guarded against; the passer-by in the street might mutter "Foreign devil! Kill!" In the home, too, enormous spiders could take shelter behind pictures, cockroaches munch their way through the binding of books, and bookworms do the rest. Suits could get mould in a day or two, if left in the humid atmosphere.

None of this quenched Turner's appetite. He goes down a Canton shopping street admiring the skills of porcelain, furniture, metalwork or silk embroidery. He explores caves, is carried up a mountain, bouncing in a light wicker chair, by cheerful and resolute men to visit a distant monastery. He tries to grasp the nature of Chinese history, finding that a "Liberal Party" had been set up in 1100, but Conservatives soon suppressed it. Geomancy was the real problem of cultural conflict. Every Chinese was sensitive about the spirits of the land. Railways were built without thought for such sensibilities; telegraph poles strude across the landscape regardless; church spires were particularly offensive. All aspects of the Chinese scene captured Turner's attention and all his comments are lively.

Time and the man of letters

Gavan Daws

When the public library of the colony of Victoria, Australia, opened in the city of Melbourne in the 1850s, it opened to everyone. You did not need a letter from some respectable person to qualify you for a reader's ticket—an impulse to read was enough to qualify you. If I had been fourteen or older in those years, I could have come in off the street like everyone else, passing by the Hall of Busto—more than a hundred great infidels represented, all from European countries—continuing straight on into the reading room, and finishing up close enough to the books to see the titles stamped in gold on the bindings. There were no attendants to block the reader from getting at what he wanted. This was trustees' policy, to foster actual reading rather than perpetuate the condition of waiting to read. So I could have picked the volume of my choice from the shelves with my own hands, found myself a chair, and turned to page one; total elapsed time less than five minutes. Now read on.

I got there in the 1950s, a hundred years too late for instant access. Quite early, in fact, things had begun to come between the reader and what he wanted to read. First it was the binders of scientific journals. They used to take so long about their work that bound volumes came on to the shelves six or seven years old. Then in the 1870s it was Marcus Clarke. He was a man of letters, not of catalogue cards. He had written one of the early great Australian novels, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, about a man in the colonies on a long sentence, and at the library he felt cursed and afflicted by solitary hard labour and the dreadful slowness of the passage of time. He died at thirty-five in 1881, leaving as the visible record of ten years' employment (in the ill-tempered words of a successor) only some badly kept minute books and a worse than badly kept catalogue of bibliographies that were his special charge.

The library was mostly the creation of Redmond Barry. He was chairman of the board of trustees from the beginning to his death in 1880, a judge in the colony's courts, an Anglican Irishman who loved England and a man with big ambitions for Melbourne readers. When the library got going properly the reading room had 650 chairs. Many nights all seats were taken, with an overflow of the chairless squatting in the aisles on the coco-matting floor, quietly and in good order, reading. Anyone could write in the suggestion book, but Redmond Barry had a whole suggestion book to himself, and he wanted a collection in Melbourne second only to the one at the British Museum Library, in his own time. His thinking started with everything cited by Gibbon and extended to everything worthwhile published since 1840. Twenty-five years of Barry, and the Melbourne Public Library had 100,000 volumes on its shelves, a quarter of a million readers a year, and more branches in the colony of Victoria than there were in the whole of England. Melbourne in the 1880s was a remarkable city. It came to be called marvellous Melbourne, mostly by people who lived there.

If you were looking for the fourth biggest Shakespeare collection on earth, the Melbourne Public Library was the place to find it.

When the library arrived at its fiftieth anniversary the chief librarian, E. La Touche Armstrong, was moved to think of a new reading room, one with a dome. His mind was not on making the place easier and speedier for readers, just grander. He travelled and saw the Library of Congress and the British Museum, and he wanted the Melbourne dome to look like theirs, only bigger. He got the Victorian government to pay for one higher and wider than any in the world short of the Pantheon and St Peter's in Rome, and at any rate the biggest on earth in ferroconcrete.

Under the dome you were still free to get at thousands of volumes with your own hands, unobstructed by attendants, but the shelves went so high up the wall that you might have to use a fireman's ladder. Another main hazard was that from an early date bits of ceiling began to break loose and fall, landing among or on readers; and the trustees had to take out risk insurance based upon the design and materials of the biggest dome ever built on earth in ferroconcrete. The reading room under the dome was the first place where I ever sat down and seriously tried to read a long book that I had found from a card catalogue. In the 1950s bits were still falling, though mainly only surface plaster from around the central lantern, and this was not considered a disincentive to reading. In later years a friend of a friend saw Frank "Typhoon" Tyson, retired from thumping Australian batsmen about the head and body in favour of emigration and a job at a Melbourne private school for boys, reading *Romeo and Juliet* without a helmet.

You could still walk straight into the library, still no ticket required, so it was an act purely voluntary, even gratuitous, on the part of me and my friends to pause on the way up the reading room steps, reach out at arm's length, and drop our punched tram tickets in a blue and white vase, received 1897, reproduction of fifteenth-century majolica ware from Florence, original in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England. We thought this behaviour was original with us; but in 1958, when I thought I was about to leave Melbourne, I actually took the trouble to lean over and look in the vase, and what I saw was a mulch of tram tickets the better part of a foot deep—years more reading time than my friends and I could ever have accounted for. It was a revelation. A whole population had been dropping their tram tickets in there too, perhaps before we were born, perhaps as long as there had been Melbourne trams, if not majolica vases. What I was looking at was surely the biggest collection of punched Swanston Street tram tickets on earth.

Underneath the reading room was the newspaper room. Down there you could sit safe from falling dome pieces. In fact there were no sudden moves of any kind. Here you could not fetch your reading yourself. There were attendants. When they reached the newspaper room I never knew, but they had the look of being inside for a long stretch, breathing old air,

historic, molecules trapped down there long ago, perhaps dating from the time when the colonies federated and Australia became a nation.

The attendants' uniform was a grey dust-coat, and in the front pocket of each, at the hip, there rode a bottle of the newspaper room house wine, screwtop tawny port. You would ask for your old newspaper, and the attendant would nod and walk away, receding from your view at the pace of a tide gently outgoing, to disappear behind the Staff Only screen. Often he was gone so long you grew faint from thirst. So you would step across Swanston Street to the old Travellers Rest Hotel for a beer, and then back to the deep still silence of the newspaper room, where at last a head might come out at tortoise pace from behind the Staff Only screen and its mouth would open and say: Bad luck, at the binders, care to wait, back later this year, maybe next.

I waited until 1958. Before I left Melbourne I looked behind the Staff Only screen, and there were all the papers. I could reach out and touch them with my own hand, no attendant visible, but away in the far stacks the single solitary sound of metal screwtop against glass thread. There was a message in that bottle, if only I had been able to read it then: Life is short, historical research is long.

Melbourne Public Library is getting ready for the next 200 years. There will be a new set of buildings, incorporating the old dome, plus a new reading room, underground, roofed by a version of the dome reversed, pointing downward. There will be high-tech information retrieval, and advanced conservation. The talk is of emigration, the crumbling of twentieth-century high-acid paper over time, and of ways to fend it off; how to preserve original documents by making them available to readers only on microfilm; and physical security—how to cope with possible disasters, fires, floods and bombs. It all sounded familiar when I was last there. I had just come from working in a collection in Europe so secure that the reading room doors, always shut, have no handles, and to leave, even just to stretch the legs, you have to apply for a metal tag that electronically releases the concealed lock.

One day when the tag failed to work and we were all locked in, I thought of a man I know who organizes his research a different way. He throws bottles in the sea with messages in them and waits to see where they turn up. The idea came to him when he was giving lectures on a cruise ship that specializes in educational tourism for the well-off in Antarctic waters. He got everyone to drink wine, re-cork the bottles with a message inside, and throw them in, mostly in Drake Passage, where the west wind drift sweeps between South America and Antarctica. He threw in twenty bottles and has heard of about five so far, ranging in time from twenty-six to eighty months. The quickest was to a beach in Tasmania. The slowest was to a beach on Easter Island. So—your drink the wine and throw the bottles in and the attraction is in how long it takes to show up, if it ever does. And this is the research. It takes as long as it takes.

The bottle to Easter Island went around Antarctica through the South Atlantic, across the Indian Ocean, south of Australia and New Zealand, and out into the Pacific, unobstructed, to be swept north into lower latitudes, fetching up at last on a beach. It moved at something like twenty-one centimetres a minute for eighty months. I calculate that this was about the pace of the newspaper room attendants at the Melbourne Public Library in the 1950s. There is another man tracking the movements of feral camels in central Australia by means of a message-sending collar, satellite-connected. If those collars had been available thirty years ago, it would be possible to know where the attendants went, and what track they followed while they were gone. But that is an academic question.

It was at the British Museum, waiting for books that I did my own first series of time and distance calculations for the intending reader, showing that it took less time on average to fly from any point in the BBC to London, inclusive of baggage delivery at the carousel, than it did to travel by London bus or tube to the British Museum Library, get your books delivered and start reading.

Some years later again, while I was waiting

at the Archives Nationales in Paris (reader's ticket no dome) for a box of manuscript papers to be delivered, I stumbled upon an even greater mystery about elapsed time. I was going through the letters of a man who had been in Polynesia in the nineteenth century. He had written innumerable letters, fathered many children, and had done any number of other things, including some decades of doctoring among the islanders. Why, I wondered as I waited, did he seem to be able to get so much more done than I ever managed? Where did he find the time? To be sure, he did not have to wait for books and papers to be delivered. But then, just on the matter of putting words on paper, I had the advantage by far. He used a steel nib and inkwell. I had followed the arrow of twentieth-century technology, moving from serious fountain pen (gold nib, screw top, refillable reservoir), to portable manual typewriter, to electric machine (self-correcting), and finally to computer keyboard (with hard disk). Still this nineteenth-century man outwitted me, as to speed and endurance both.

I decided to do a test run. I wrote out one of his letters by hand, copying as fast as I could. It took a long time. Then I counted how many letters he had written, and worked out how long it would take me to copy them all: 200 years. If I wrote like a demon I could bring it down to 150 but even this left me with a great deal to ponder.

I took the question to a friend of mine, a physicist, and he said a friend of his had raised the very same point, about Voltaire and how much he had put on paper. And this had led him to hypothesize that in the twentieth century the universe must somehow have speeded up, everything in it, the whole system, and because we were all inside the system we did not notice we were being short-changed for time. I liked the sound of this. But in less time than it took to get more papers delivered at the Archives Nationales, another question surfaced. Why were library attendants affected so much more seriously than the rest of us? Behind those Staff Only screens, time obviously went hurtling by at a rate utterly devastating to human accomplishment. Attendants went in young and strong and emerged—if they emerged at all—spent and old. If the attendant system had prevailed in Voltaire's day he never would have finished his book.

Recently I was back at the Melbourne Public Library—now the State Library of Victoria—for the first time in almost thirty years, to find that they had just been through their first complete stocktaking for a century and a quarter, in which they turned up all sorts of interesting things, including Redmond Barry's notebook with all the works cited by Gibbon, and sixteen busts in the basement, all that remained of the original hundred and more. I looked in the vase on the reading room steps. It was empty. All the Swanston Street tram tickets were gone. I did not ask where.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS ON

The TLS of June 8, 1911 contained a review of *Owen Wister's* Members of the Family, from which these extracts are taken:

... There are some delightful Western personalities in these tales, who are content to define themselves by their works rather than by words (the Virginian himself is introduced among them as a kind of touchstone—a subtle method of avoiding what is called "good analysis" by the average novelist), and always contrive to keep their morals judiciously concealed. The true Westerner not only refrained from exhibiting his moral standard in public, but invariably attributed his most exemplary acts of charity or humility to malign motives. Of all the latter-day novelists who have explored the literary possibilities of the vanished West (which, by the way, is not to be rediscovered in Western or Northern Canada, where the foundations of social order were laid even in Prince Rupert's day) Owen Wister is the only one who has grasped the psychological realities that lay behind this all-pervading *mauvaise honte*. The West was not only a picturesque wilderness, but also a state of mind; and that historical fact is set forth even more clearly in these short stories than in "The Virginian", which is not surpassed as a picture of manners even by Mark Twain's romances of the Mississippi river life.

Letters

The Problem of God

Sir, — When six people are asked to "consider ways in which belief in, and ideas about, God impinge on a number of areas of human activity and thought" (May 23), it is predictable that some of them will be tempted to include attacks on people with no belief in God, and that some such people will be provoked to reply; but Brian Pippard and Roger Scruton really must be answered.

Professor Pippard begins his article with an ambiguous statement of his agnosticism—"neither believing nor disbelieving in a supreme being, lacking indeed any personal experience which might allow me to attach a meaning to the idea"—and then comments: "To make this state of ignorance an excuse or even an incentive to attack the beliefs of others, as some do, seems to me indefensible." He immediately follows the tradition of agnosticism by politely refraining from attacking the beliefs of theists but rudely attacking the beliefs of atheists—comparing them with tone-deaf people who deny the meaning of music, which begs the question in the tradition of theological controversy.

Professor Pippard ends his article with another gratuitous sneer at "the efforts of the professional atheist, who must produce better arguments than bluff common sense to laugh away the certainty of those who are convinced of God's presence within them". Most atheists certainly prefer common sense to logic-chopping and laughter to abuse, but serious atheists actually do produce more subtle arguments drawn from philosophy (see Leszek Kolakowski's article), from social science (see Raymond Firth's article), and even from natural science (pace Professor Pippard).

Professor Scruton's article is altogether more objectionable, being a fine example of the amalgam technique. He unscrupulously identifies three different sets of phenomena—Marx's and Nietzsche's individual critiques of theism, later philosophical systems vaguely described as "Marxian" and "Nietzschean" "religions" or "superstitions", and the later political systems of left-wing and right-wing totalitarianism. Apart from the outrageous personal libels on Marx and Nietzsche, who are allegedly responsible for mass murders perpetrated long after their deaths, he emphasizes the general point that Communist and Fascist atrocities are unique because they are based on "the naturalistic view of man"—atheist humanism. But are they really so very different from all the atrocities which have disfigured the whole of human history and which have been based on myths of nation, race, church and state, justified by supernaturalistic views of man? Do the horrors of Communism and Fascism really represent a moral quantum leap from the long traditions of dictatorship and slavery, heresy-hunts and witch-hunts, Holy Wars and Holy Inquisitions, pogroms of Jews in Europe and massacres of aboriginal populations in other countries, culminating in the nuclear bomb (first used by Western democrats in the name of Christian civilization)?

Scruton's article is surely an instance of the religious view that any lie will do in the service of faith, and an insult to all the non-religious people who oppose both left-wing and right-wing totalitarianism just as much as he does and who defend humanity without calling it sacred or divine.

NICOLAS WALTER.
Rationalist Press Association, 88 Islington High Street, London N1.

The Faber Book of Political Verse

Sir, — George Steiner complains about the "numbing" simplifications in Tom Paulin's preface to *The Faber Book of Political Verse* (May 23). But it would be hard to imagine a simplification more numbing than the one with which he follows up his complaint. "If so much of classic writing is 'elitist' in its technical resources and appeal, this is", he explains, "very obviously because literature of a more concentrated, self-conscious sort will always draw on more complex and richly referential levels of discourse and understanding. Motions of spirit which aim at perfection are, as Spinoza reminds us, difficult."

Nothing in this explanation is very obvious. There is no obvious reason why the concentration or self-consciousness of a literary text should always depend upon the complexity of its discourse or the richness of its reference. Counter-examples are easy to find: the lyrics of Blake, for example, or the poetry, or prose, of Hardy. Besides, complexity of discourse and richness of reference are not in themselves "elitist". It depends on the kinds of complexity and richness which we have in mind. Indeed the argument that language and thought are elitist inasmuch as they are difficult is little more than one among many characteristic devices by which an élite seeks to maintain its privilege. Steiner's reference to Spinoza is revealing. It adds nothing to the force of his argument but nicely establishes the writer's credentials at the same time as warning off the less-knowing reader. Now that is elitist.

MICHAEL ARMSTRONG.
15 Furzedown Road, Southampton.

The Audit of War

Sir, — Robert Skidelsky's peevish little letter (May 23) entirely confirms the justice of my analysis in *The Audit of War* so far as the British tradition in education and training is concerned. He may choose to adopt the role of "academic" observing the British scene from the distance of his state-funded balloon, but I was writing (to repeat the words of my preface for the benefit of the evidently myopic) an "operational study" intended to cast light on Britain's post-war decline as an industrial society; and I certainly see myself as taking part metaphorically in the board-room discussions of a conglomerate losing market share. If I may remind Professor Skidelsky, unless this loss is reversed there is likely to be a smaller and smaller take-off through the taxpayer available to support the high-minded activity of being "academics discussing historical matters".

Moreover, it seems to me characteristic of the "liberal arts" tradition of British education that Skidelsky should regard it as a "mistake" if Britain's contemporary problems be dealt with in your columns in a spirit of active engagement rather than the remotely "academic". I would suggest to him that it is just as legitimate, and possibly more constructive, to attack the question of British economic decline from the standpoint of a board-room as from a seminar room or senior common-room; and I am sure that the TLS has the breadth of mind and culture to encompass all three.

CORRELLI BARNETT.
Cambridge House, East Carleton, Norwich.

Paisley Pattern

Sir, — J. P. Kenyon's bewilderment (Letters, May 30) at the use of "to get off at Paisley" to mean coitus interruptus is easily explained: he lives in Fife, which is on the east coast of Scotland. For many west-coasters, particularly Glaswegians, there used to be (and for some still are) but two train journeys a year—to and from Wemyss Bay at the Fair fortnight, where the Clyde steamers leave to go down to Rothesay. Paisley is the last stop before Glasgow on the journey back; to get off at Paisley, therefore, is to stop short of going the whole way.

JAMES CAMPBELL.
76c Coningham Road, London W12.

Sir, — On Merseyside the practice of coitus interruptus was, and may still be, referred to as "getting off at Edge Hill", this being the last station before Liverpool Lime Street.

GEORGE FREYDAY.
Magdalen College, Cambridge.

Sir, — A native of that burgh, I can only offer a rather embarrassed response to J. P. Kenyon's request (Letters, May 30) for further background to the expression "getting off at Paisley".

Edwin Morgan has claimed it suggests coitus interruptus. Perhaps. In my teens it was taken to mean stupidity, on the grounds that anyone willingly getting off bus or train in the wastes of Paisley—rather than taking the extra ten minutes and waiting for Glasgow—was not the full shilling.

Having supported the local football club—St

Mirren—for years with mounting depression but with no evident affective disorder, I'd suggest this usage has the greater claim to authenticity. Getting off at Gilmour Street (the ground at Love Street no longer merits a halt) week after week is a sure sign of shrinking wit.

BRIAN MORTON.
213 Upland Road, Dulwich, London SE22.

'Moderns and Contemporaries'

Sir, — As I observed in my review (May 9), John Lucas leaps eagerly into the thick of invisible debates. I am loath to encourage him in this exercise, but he accuses me (Letters, May 23) of misrepresenting him, and asserts that I did not read his essays. Alas, I did.

The factual point on which he seeks to correct me is that, according to him, I wrongly remarked that the places of first publication are not provided. My complaint was that "the times and places of first publication are not provided"; they are not. Perhaps Professor Lucas supposes that merely mentioning the papers in which reviews appeared is a satisfactory form of reference. Perhaps, too, he believes that he reported my comment accurately enough. But if so there is no arguing with him.

DAVID SEXTON.
11 Selwyn Road, Cambridge.

'My Sweet Lord'

Sir, — A. David Jones has written an interesting review (May 23) of Peter B. Clarke's *Black Paradise* and Kim Knott's *My Sweet Lord: The Hare Krishna movement*. However, I am a trifle perplexed when Mr Jones writes, "Kim Knott is quick to point out that organizations which campaign against 'cults', such as the Deo Gloria Trust and FAIR (Family Action Information and Rescue), sometimes subject those they endeavour to save to worse treatment than they would experience within a religious movement." Not only is there no foundation for this statement, but a very careful reading of Knott's book provides little or no support for the contention either. Beyond the blandest of comments on FAIR's stance, occupying a few paragraphs on page 79 of the book, there is nothing to sustain Jones's assertion.

FAIR's essential role is to support families when a son or daughter, husband or wife, joins a New Religious Movement. It does not campaign against "cults" but merely seeks, as well, to alert the public to some of the malpractices that sometimes characterize the activities of some New Religions. In that way FAIR may be doing more for religious freedom than some of its critics have often appreciated.

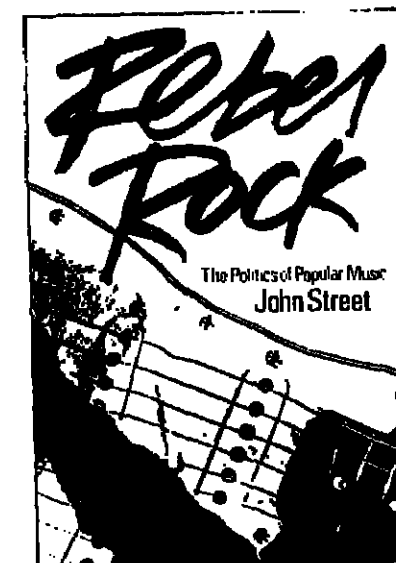
M. T. M. CASEY McCANN.
Flat 2, Temple House, 36 High Street, Sevenoaks, Kent.

'Buildings for Music'

Sir, — In his review of Michael Forsyth's *Buildings for Music* (April 25) Sherban Cantacuzino writes: "Vauxhall, the author reminds us, is the Russian Volkzal, which originally meant concert-hall." This is nonsense; the Muscovites, greatly impressed by the splendid Vauxhall Gardens, created a copy, and subsequently the first railway station to be constructed in Moscow was sited next to the garden. As a result *vokzal* is the Russian name for railway station (see the *Oxford Russian-English Dictionary* or any other reputable Russian-English dictionary) and has nothing whatever to do with concert-halls.

J. E. GARROD.
6 rue des Telliers, Mons, Belgium.

The first phase of the restoration of Charleston Farmhouse, the former home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, is now complete and the house will open to the public for the first time on June 8. Opening hours are between 2pm and 6pm on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays (and on August Bank Holiday Monday) each week until the end of October; the admission fee will be £1.50. The Charleston Trust hopes to complete the second phase of restoration by April 1987.



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COMMENTARY

Talking brains

R. V. Holdsworth

BEN JONSON
Every Man in His Humour
Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon

T. S. Eliot asserted that *Every Man in His Humour* was "not the play in which Jonson found his genius". Jonson took the opposite view. In his folio *Works* of 1616, where the setting is changed from the quarto's Florence to London, he saluted the play as his first fruits, thus quietly obliterating several earlier pieces, and modestly added that it was "one such . . . as other plays should be". Both estimates can be defended. *Every Man in* is classically Jonsonian in its parade of blinkered obsessives who much prefer fantasy to fact and who make language (which Jonson believes always "imitates the public riot") the first casualty in the ensuing war against commonsense. The play yields two of Jonson's most vivid case-studies: the pseudo-soldier Bobadill, one of the great Jonsonian exponents of the use of jargon to mystify and impress, and the pathologically jealous Kiteley, a star role for Cunnick, Kean, and Macready and possibly for Shakespeare, who acted in the first production and plundered the part for *Othello*. Kiteley, a chronic solipsist, utters a darker truth about himself than he realizes when he declares a longing to be "free master of mine own free thoughts", as does Bobadill when he confesses "I love a cleanly and quiet privacy above all the tumult and roar of fortune."

On the other hand *Every Man* in seems decidedly un-Jonsonian, and unconvincing, in its attempt to be a romantic comedy which matters because human beings can change and come together and the plot can show them doing it. True, there is a great deal of talk about love, mutual understanding, and reform. "There is," announces Old Knowell, father of the nominal hero, "a way of winning more by love, / And urging of the modesty, than fear." Kiteley in one of his supposedly saner moments agrees: "use the soft, persuading way . . . More winning than enforcing the consent." And obligingly the merry Justice Clement, after Edward's marriage, comes up with a dedication of the final festival "to friendship, love, and laughter". But Kiteley and the clowns, splendidly impervious to sticks let alone carrots, rapidly sabotage such comforting notions of human community. Incapable of change, they turn, and turn us, away from the plot to luxuriate in the exotic and secluded terrain of their own minds, offering, instead of anything so dull as reason or commonsense, seductive verbal adventures concerning the op-

erations of the "new disease", a solution to excessive expenditure on national defence, and appropriately, red herrings. The problem is that Jonson has not yet recognized the formal implications of his own impetus towards a vision of human beings as fundamentally and unbridgeably divided, a vision for which the New Comedy (and Shakespearean) plot of *Every Man in*, with its themes of individual and social wholeness, is exactly the wrong vehicle. Indeed, his greatest comedies succeed by "doing without a plot", as Eliot famously noted, substituting what Jonson called the "centre attractive" of a unifying symbol (an inheritance, the philosopher's stone) and a sharply restricted location (a bedchamber, a house vacated by its owner). In *Every Man in*, however, the festive destination, busily pursued through twenty changes of scene between Hoxton and Coleman Street, remains to distract us with the implausible message that reality is superior to delusion, and monsters can turn into men.

In John Child's excellent production one all but forgets about this mismatching, until he calls attention to it with some tinkering in the finale. The dense, bitty clutter of the Jonsonian urban scene, through which his characters seem to float like brains suspended in formaldehyde, is marvellously evoked here, despite the lack of props compelled by the apron stage (though the vomit in Bobadill's bedside basin is prominently present, and he finds a huge rat swinging on his tattered cloak). Everyone seems weighed down with objects, Bobadill with guns, bombs, and loading equipment, Cob with ladies and tankards. Formal with beribboned scrolls and later cacophonously clanking armour, and Matthew, as the text requires, with "a realm, a commonwealth of paper in his hose". Equally well judged is the stark stress on physical vindictiveness, born of the inability of the "soft, persuading way" the play elsewhere recommends. Big leather cudgels are ever at the ready, to produce not only ringing thwacks from the pates of their targets but also blood and crimson bruises. After the furious quarrel outside Cob's house, Tib's impatient "Why do you not go?" acquires a special meaning as she has just immobilized the three men with kicks to the groin. Jonson would have welcomed, too, the way in which the Swan's intimate quasi-Elizabethan staging conditions are exploited to involve and sometimes attack the audience, reflecting his contradictory view of his kind spectators as at once learned understanders and ignorant gapers. Several characters (but not, rightly, the clowns) step through the fictional wall to complain, justify themselves, or ask advice. Many of the individual performances are

tours de force. Almost normal at first, which means that some lurking sexual puns ("I will let you in thus to my private") go unregistered, Henry Goodman's Kiteley slides into dithering paranoia, passing his hand over his hair as though checking for horns, leaping with shrill yelps into the air as though being followed, at one point even surveying the audience with a suspicious, pop-eyed glare. Pete Postlethwaite, plumed and monocled, captures the contrastingly serene lunacy of Bobadill, providing in his speech on national defence the high point of the evening, and in his boast that he and his nineteen champions "would come into the field the tenth of March, or thereabouts" – a wonderfully mad combination of specificity and utter irrelevance which shows why Dickens loved the role – the evening's funniest line. The Brainworm of David Haig makes the part seem less tiresome than it does on the page.

More questionably, Caird makes some hundred substitutions or insertions mainly from the quarto text, some of which seem designed to play down the sense of immutable folly and play up the idea of redemption. Edward's part is strengthened by the restoration of most of his long apology for poetry, axed from the folio,

Body music

Wilfrid Mellers

HARRISON BIRTWISTLE
The Mask of Orpheus
Coliseum

Looking back on European culture over the centuries we may observe how great and less than great composers have helped reconcile us to the appalling cruelty of life, the agonizing ecstasy of love, and the scary inevitability of death; and have done so by seeking, sometimes attaining, identity between flesh and word. In this process one myth has haunted man's consciousness, the legend of Orpheus: a poet-composer-priest of ancient Thrace who attempted, through his art and reason, to play God, and even to challenge death itself. Many other myths, such as Persephone's descent to nether-earth at the winter solstice, accrued, barnacle-like, to the original story, which was reinterpreted in the light of men's changing needs. For Christian Alonso X, in thirteenth-century Leon, Orpheus was King David, seeking return to the One as he parleyed with the birds and beasts. For High Renaissance Monteverdi, Orpheus sang of a hero's courage and glory which, since man is not God but fallibly mortal, turned out to be vain glory. Later Liszt made God-presuming Orpheus a play-actor, like himself, while Offenbach debunked him, leaving him happy in hell, though teetering on the Second Empire abyss. Stravinsky, in the Waste Land of the twentieth century and in the wake of two wars to destroy (not save) civilization, reinstated the pristine savagery of the original tale, allowing the Terrible Mothers to rend Orpheus to pieces in revenge for his patriarchal pride.

Many other composers have toyed with Orpheus, among them Harrison Birtwistle, who has been preoccupied with *The Mask of Orpheus* over a span of fifteen years. So protean a myth is clearly relevant to our pluralistic civilization, as Peter Zinoviev demonstrates in his psychologically and philosophically sophisticated libretto. Birtwistle has made what Harry Patch called corporeal music: sounds – such as we've long forgotten, to our bitter cost – that involve bodily action along with words so that, as with real primitive music, one lives, moves and has one's being in them, while they last. The miracle is that Birtwistle's score functions in alliance with visual images and mimetic movement, as a rite pertinent to our global world. He evokes, as he did in his "Greek" experiments at the National Theatre, worlds alien to, yet deeply within us. Music, décor, costumes and mime call on multifarious cultures: from Old English fertility plays and Aboriginal and Polynesian rites of passage to the sophistications of Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatre. What comes out is neither Greek nor Japanese nor Old English for, as Birtwistle

and his courtship and marrying of Bridget, for which Jonson neglected to supply a single word of dialogue, is made more credible by a mimed poetry reading in the midst of the sword-fight in Kiteley's house and a long kiss at the close. Bobadill and Matthew, who linger disconcertingly in the folio, here suffer their premature quarto dismissal, and Kiteley's final speech of reform, which is ironically self-undercutting in both versions, becomes Jonson's poem "Against Jealousy", which flatly demands "Think'st thou that love is helped by fear?" Nevertheless, Kiteley is allowed to keep his folio comment on what he has just said, "I have learned so much verse out of a jealous man's part in a play", which implies that his reformation is a pretence. Worse still, some of the folio's aggravated symptoms of verbal riot are suppressed: Bobadill's "chartel" becomes the quarto's "challenge", even though its obscurity is precisely the point, and some of the more flamboyant oaths, such as "By this daylight" and "By this hand", revert to their drabber, deliberately Catholic counterparts ("By Jesu", "By St. Mark"). No doubt Jonson, who actually killed an actor in a fight within days of the play opening, would have banged a few heads in the green room over this.

puts it, this is a world not imitated but made. The slowly initiatory birth of the first act, the terrifying hurlyburly of the second act in hell, the retrospective resolution of the third act, are sublimely simple in their very complexity. Although Orpheus is annihilated, as in many versions of the myth, he is also reborn; and I cannot recall a modern theatre piece that so overwhelmingly achieves, at its mysteriously serene end, the catharsis that was the goal of and justification for the "pity and terror" of Aeschylean and Shakespearean tragedy.

Like the primitive and oriental artificers whom he has resourcefully drawn on but not emulated, Birtwistle thinks not linearly but circularly, refashioning the myths outside Time, in ever fluctuating permutations. This accords with the findings of our psychology, while allowing for musical recapitulations helpful to those too entrenched in linearity to shake out of it. In any case, in the theatre doubts do not occur, so gripped are we by the vitality of the sounds and the startlements of the spectacle. Birtwistle deploys his bands of percussion, woodwind and brass – one does not miss strings, even over so long a stretch – in manners closer to Polynesian, Japanese and Javanese theatre than to Western symphony; yet he creates sonorities that belong irresistibly to us, at least when enunciated as potently as they are by the orchestra under Elgar Howarth, with the assistance of Paul Daniel. His singing lines, however taxing, are superbly conceived for the voice. The two Orpheuses and the two Eurydices (as man or woman and as myth) are sung and mimed by Philip Langridge and Nigel Robson, and by Jean Rigby (especially) and Ethna Robinson, with a paradoxically disciplined exuberance worthy of the music. Marie Angel displays even more than her usual charisma as black Hecate and the horrendous Oracle of the Dead. Tom McDonnell and Robert Macann as the man and myth Aristaeus (the bee-keeping alternative lover who was pursuing Eurydice when she was nipped by the serpent of mortality) strike the right balance in relation to the central protagonists.

The characters' third identity (as heroes) is represented by mimes and awe-inspiring puppet-figures; throughout, the triple identities work with persuasive spontaneity, perhaps because we now accept such concepts at a visceral as well as intellectual level. All the opera singers, not merely the professional dancers, move, mime and run as to the manner born: inspired no doubt by the blazing grandeur of Birtwistle's score, the zest of David Freeman's production, and the splendour of Jocelyn Herbert's sets, costumes and masks. Barry Anderson's control of the electrophonics – which chime with the live instruments to represent the events' supernatural, Apollonian dimension – seems exemplary. As a whole, this production must be the most formidable undertaking the English National Opera has tackled.

Dialectical diversions

Stephen Fender

TREVOR GRIFFITHS
Real Dreams
The Pit, Barbican

On the humid evening of July 4, 1969, the members of a radical cell in Cleveland, Ohio, are doing pretty much what other, less politically aware Americans are doing on Independence Day: eating potato salad, pulling from a jug of California wine, joking, reacting with some respect to a thunderstorm building up outside. The mood changes as Ramon comes in, wearing a red beret and literally hopping mad. Ramon represents the Spanish People in Cleveland, whose acronym is SPIC (was there really such a group? I didn't think the hispanic sense of humour ran along quite those lines). Ramon has been drinking. He is looking for a fight, because he wants the white, middle-class radicals to molotov-cocktail the A&P supermarket for not observing Cesar Chavez's boycott of non-union produce from the Imperial Valley, and he suspects – rightly – that the students will want to talk this thing out

before acting in the heat of the evening. Because, as one of them says, "This shit has got to be planned. Not on a couple hours notice after we're all fuckin' drunk, for Christ's sake." Jack, their leader, disagrees:

What the fuck are we here for? Mm? Anyone remember? This is the SPIC's turf. They live here. . . . We came in off our campuses setting up our SDS collective. . . . For weeks we've bin pushing Ramon to get 'em to meet with us face-to-face; this is recognition they're offering. OK, I don't like the action, I don't like the timing, not one fuckin' bit, but we can't just say no. If Ramon tells them we're bullshit, you'd better believe it, we are bullshit. And we'll have nothing.

The attack is a fiasco. Ramon himself makes so much noise that they are discovered and have to abandon the old Atlantic and Pacific unburnt. The SPICs, suspecting one of the collective of having called the "fire pigs", demand that she be dragged out for "interrogation". The students close ranks and get out some old guns to defend their commune, which the SPICs have surrounded with apparently murderous intent. Revolutionary drama turns into *Assault on Precinct 13*. Or, as Jack says, I mean, what the fuck is happening. Man? This is

fuckin' Wagon Train. . . . what are we doin'? We're protecting our goddam womenfolk. From the savages. Only what we're supposed to be doin' is joinin' the savages. It wasn't supposed to turn out like this.

Were the American 1960s the beginning of the revolution (and revolution in what?) or just the century's carnival? Just about everyone thinks he or she has the answer to that one now. Griffiths is not so sure. He doesn't mask the farce of the situation, nor the minor ironies that flicker within it. The students are, after all, intelligent and self-aware, which is what makes irony possible and street action less "effective". But they are also convincingly loyal, courageous and in theory right.

The problem is that the story line of the "exploitative media" is not the only paradigm into which the play lapses. The author of *The Party* and the moving *Of For England* is too good a dramatist to bore his audience with programmatic dialogue, or deprive them of suspense. So *Real Dreams* is Brecht in reverse; instead of alienation we get cuddly characters and a plot that takes off under its own momentum, unchecked by "history". The production tries to contextualize the action, providing television monitors relaying shots of the Viet-

nam bombing and a programme containing one of those meaningful chronologies that have become fashionable in the "relevant" London theatre: "1968: *Days of Future Past* (Moody Blues) enters charts; Robert Kennedy assassinated; Riots during Democratic Convention in Chicago; Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* released", and so on. (Are they serious?) Then the logic of both plot and production is broken, when the students, after failing every which way but in their intentions, emerge in judo outfits to move to a tai-chi exercise and recite a prison poem by Ho Chi Minh, as the stage directions say, "with perfect timing, tone and meaning".

But as Brecht would say, "Oh, Sir, God help me, no." The theatrical effect is of the end of *A Chorus Line*, where the disorderly, slovenly dancers finally pull their act together in uniform splendour. But whereas with *A Chorus Line* it was just possible to believe that the dancers might have left off their teeth-grindingly boring introspections long enough to rehearse their number, here there is no link at all between the stage action and the final masque of harmony. This is faith taking over where the dialectic leaves off.

Suggestions and directions

Katharine Worth

AUGUST STRINDBERG
Creditors
Translated by Michael Meyer
Almeida Theatre

Strindberg wrote *Creditors* in 1888, just after *Miss Julie* and it was his favourite of the two plays: "modern right through", he said. The brilliant performances at the Almeida Theatre help us to understand this judgment. From the moment the play opens, with two men obsessively discussing the woman whom they have each "owned" as a wife, an authentic modern note is struck, of darkly witty self-consciousness. An urbane crust is stretched across the inferno that finally bubbles over in the horrific scene of a man's disintegration.

Strindberg provides a steely melodrama to underpin the modernity: a vengeful first husband destroys his hapless successor by infiltrating his mind, undermining his self-confidence and stage-managing a scene in which his rival eavesdrops on the seduction of the wife by the man he had supplanted: already half destroyed, the victim collapses in a fit and dies.

Within this revenge framework, Suzanne Berish as Tekla, Ian McDiarmid as the avenging Gustav and Jonathan Kent as Adolf, act out a delicate psychological exploration which gains an extra layer of interest from the fact that they have directed themselves (with assistance only, the programme says, from Caspar Wrede and the translator Michael Meyer). *Creditors* gives them an ideal opportunity both in its layout – it is a sequence of two-handers with one actor always off-stage, twice in an eavesdropping position – and in its substance, which is to do with people influencing and directing each other. Actors performing actors. Tekla and Gustav are expert at presenting themselves as they wish to be seen: even at the end Suzanne Berish preserves her claim to be thought of as sensuous rather than wanton, the question which torments the two men who have lived with her.

This is no penitential exercise in Nordic gloom. The game the three actors play with each other is tense and threatening but it has pleasure in it, too, and even fun. Ian McDiarmid succeeds in making Gustav a complex and interesting personality, all the more formidable for his wry sense of humour. We can see in his coolly measuring looks at his victim that he is engaged in a deadly brain-washing experiment but still we are grateful to him for his jokes and little deflating remarks, as when he comments drily on a flood of analysis from Adolf: "In other words, you're not really happy." An insidious appeal to the audience's wish for normality – we laugh with relief – and at the same time a barb, another step on the way to

destroying the rival's fragile confidence in himself.

The actors play off their own and each others' personalities with great intelligence, staying faithful to the text though often colouring it with fresh, unexpected touches. McDiarmid skilfully suggests the wounded pride and hurt behind the "playful bonhomie" of the man who knows he is a superior being (Strindberg's own account of how he wanted Gustav played). He manages to communicate without obvious physical gestures his emotional wincing when Adolf repeats Tekla's slighting account of her first husband as an "idiot". "Perhaps you're an idiot too", he suggests mildly later, getting his own back without giving away the effect the remark has had on him.

The personality Jonathan Kent projects tunes effectively with McDiarmid's, making the whole strange business of "suggesting" a man to death seem nightmarishly believable. Adolf is unaware of the identity of the friendly stranger until, behind the door, he is forced to witness the "taking back" of his wife. A born victim (Strindberg gives him crutches, to stress the point), he is fatally drawn to his destroyer. "How terribly powerful you are!", he gasps, falling on Gustav, as later he is to do on Tekla's lap, in infantile abandonment. Kent strikes with discretion the note of homosexual eroticism in Adolf's fascination with Gustav's strength – like electric power, he says – and with the likeness to Tekla he observes from time to time in his mentor's eyes.

Perhaps the most unexpected piece of characterization is the Tekla of Suzanne Berish. From the moment her sultry voice is heard, singing off-stage, hers is a mature, vital presence, not at all the cold-hearted sensualist of Gustav's portrayal. She has dignity in her sensuousness: true, she plays rather awful semi-maternal games with Adolf, but this is what suits him and she is indulgent. She has intelligence enough to fence seriously with Gustav and, despite her sexual treachery, she really loves Adolf. Even Gustav recognizes that, when she weeps over the tormented body of the man he has destroyed to punish his wife and, as the text requires, his own honour. Suzanne Berish's understated repetition of the word "honour" implies a world of moral sensitivity in which she is in fact superior to the man who thinks himself so.

Actors who direct themselves often risk losing the balance of a play. This has not happened here. On the contrary, it is an exceptionally rounded production of a play which is all too often seen as narrow and intense. The actors create real personalities, capable of wit and ordinary feeling as well as intense passion. Strindberg would surely have thought that they succeeded in making the play seem, as he hoped it would be, "humane, lovable, all three of its characters sympathetic, interesting, from start to finish."



"Tenmakers", bronze, 1980, by Ghisla Koenig; from the exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery reviewed here.

The art of work

Frances Spalding

Ghisla Koenig
Boundary Gallery, London NW8, until June 14
Serpentine Gallery, London W2, until June 15

Process and occupation are the subject of Ghisla Koenig's art. Her reliefs and sculptures record the visual, social and psychological relationships of the factory floor. Her figures are shown surrounded by industrial clutter, bent over machines or benches, huddled over tea or simply standing around. Like Stanley Spencer in his record of shipbuilding on the Clyde, she juggles attention between the animate and inanimate, directing the narrative through her handling of figures as well as the abstract shapes in the surroundings. In her reliefs, the subject is often seen from above, the foreground tilted forward and the angle of perspective changing as the eye moves in and through the scene. The result is realistic but unpredictable.

On show at the Serpentine is work that developed out of her experience of three South East London factories. Ghisla Koenig first began drawing in factories in the 1950s, while living in close proximity to light industry. Motivated by left-wing political beliefs, and a practical need for cheap models, she found that factory conditions, the noise and absorption of the piece-labourers, allowed her a liberating anonymity. The drawings she made, a good selection of which are on show, along with small scale sculpture, at Boundary Gallery, are rough-hewn, the terse, repeated strokes arriving at generalized information. They were, perhaps, chiefly a process of familiarization, the groundwork for the more particularized

but imagined reliefs and sculptures made afterwards in the studio from memory.

At one level Ghisla Koenig's work provides a historical record of vanishing industrial processes. Two of the three factories that inspired the Serpentine selection have now been closed and the workforce made redundant. One of these – Black and Edgintons – was the source for a series entitled *Tenmakers*. In these, strips of rolled clay become the perfect equivalent for canvas, looping and billowing around the workers and through machines. Elsewhere, the shapes in the industrial environment can be awkward and the scale unconvincing. Much depends on the relationship between figures and setting and on the artist's unfailing ability to portray absorption in a task. Back views are made characterful; gesture, pose, even hands denote what Koenig calls each person's unique "rhythm". Conscious that the industrial setting traps her figures, she nevertheless escapes the cliché that associates factory workers with automatons. Aware of the comradeship and isolation, the Elvis Presley fantasies and numbing boredom, of reasons for humour and lament, she creates scenes of working life that are both intimate and respectful, preserved through skill and dedication.

The summer season at the Arts Centre, Croydon, includes a celebration of the centenary year of Ronald Firbank (June 10-24). Gavin Ewart lectures on "The First Great Comic Novelist of the Twentieth Century"; Patrick Garland discusses Firbank's love for the theatre (and his single play), and Alan Hollinghurst delivers a lecture with the title "An Englishman Abroad". These events are accompanied by an exhibition of paintings by Patrick Proctor. Details are available from 98 High Street, Croydon CR0 1ND.

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John Melmoth

M.S. POWER
Lonely the Man Without Heroes
222pp. Heinemann. £9.95.
0434 599603

Lonely the Man Without Heroes, the second volume of M.S. Power's "Children of the North" trilogy, demonstrates that the making of history is a ruthless and shifty business. The factions that contend for the hearts and minds of the people of Belfast (often by the simple expedient of putting a bullet into either or both) are more comfortable with violence than with visions of a world organized otherwise. The RUC, IRA, the Parus and the SAS make and break deals as expediency dictates, only to kill one another without compunction when their "weird preciousness" puts a gloss on necessity on the facts of murder. Their interrelations are always complex, frequently devious and treacherous.

What everyone who has ever been involved has in common is the inability to return to normality; all are enthralled by the violence. In M.S. Power's analysis, the psychology of terrorism is functionally identical to that of policing. It is a neurotic condition – both sides speak of involvement as crucifixion: "Just set foot on the soil of Ireland and you'll be crucified to it forever." All parties are "nailed well and truly to this unfortunate land". *Lonely the Man Without Heroes* is less about the upsurge of sectarianism during the last fifteen years than an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, conducted by sinister men beyond any definable moral pole. Belfast is "a city waiting to disintegrate", haunted by "youngsters suckled on blood and with that terrible lust for power, a

Tough little number

Sean Hanff Korelitz

ANDREA DWORKIN
Ice and Fire
144pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.50.
0436 13960X

Early on in this, Andrea Dworkin's first novel, the unnamed and unlikeable narrator-heroine writes a screenplay for a "tough, unsentimental little number" of a film which "strangely resembles" her own story: anti-Vietnam war activity followed by prison, with "endless" strip-searching and "mangling" by prison doctors. Not that we ever hear anything about these supposedly character-forming experiences, nor, indeed, much about the fate of the "little number" itself, despite its being important enough to the narrator to justify her encounters with various salivating would-be producers. In Dworkin's tale of New York "artistic" low-life in the 1960s, characters and obsessions are taken up and dropped with such disorganized spontaneity that the reader is left only with a sense of disgusted bafflement. "N", for example (for no apparent reason, some characters are named and some are unnamed; some have initials), is the narrator's lover, collaborator on the "little number", co-prostitute and soul-sister, yet we last glimpse her curled up in pain on a soiled mattress where the narrator has left her, having taken her money, while preparing to move to Europe (for a reason that is never disclosed). Her final words on this subject: "I don't think about her again."

Dworkin, perhaps best known here and in America for books such as *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, has said that the purpose of *Ice and Fire* is to make the reader feel what pornography does to women. This won't be a pleasant read, her publisher warns us; we may be stunned, perhaps even revolted. No such luck: Dworkin completely fails to flesh out any of the points made in her non-fiction works, for *Ice and Fire* is middle class, college educated and a prostitute by choice. She "fucks" for loose change, drugs, cigarettes, cups of coffee and "big bucks" for the "little number". In between, she says, "we discuss art and politics". She is nonchalant about selling herself, and unoppressed by an exploiting pimp; it seems to be a job. As a result, and despite the

power only satisfied . . . by killing and mutilation".

Power's writing tends towards the melodramatic, but is well suited to reporting a conflict in which the chief protagonists parade *personae* of considerable melodrama. Some have survived *The Killing of Yesterday's Children*: Seamus Reilly, IRA "godfather", sublimist of hoodlums, who puts on his best suit when arranging a hit and who had his own brother shot; Inspector ("Mr") Asher, whose hatred of the IRA requires little fuelling from his vestigial Protestantism and mild allegiance to the crown; Colonel Maddox, retired early to Berkshire, permanently damaged by what he has left behind. Others appear for the first (and last) time: Colonel Shermann, barking mad even by the emphatically relaxed standards of his brother officers, and Sergeant Barton, the international assassin with a passion for Blake and Lowry, who assuages his guilt with elaborate images of his own violent destruction.

The blurbist is wrong to maintain that *Lonely the Man Without Heroes* has "all the suspense and action of a thriller"; this would not be to Power's purpose. The fact that the army is behind a recent spate of murders of IRA supporters is made plain from the outset. Far from aspiring to the thriller *bien-fait*, Power is reflecting a condition of chaos. Belfast in the 1980s is seen as a city divided by occult patterns of terror and loyalty which are virtually incomprehensible to the uninitiated and uncommitted. In the light of his two remarkable dispatches from this seemingly endless war, Power's debut, *Hunt for the Autumn Clowns*, looks increasingly like a false start. All that dilletante improvisation (which owed more than a touch to Faulkner) has now been jettisoned; his achievement is to give expression to the bitterness and suffering that have been provoking Ireland for so long.

plentiful scenes of gratuitous violence, gang-rap and sadism to which they are subjected, one can't seem to drum up any interest in or sympathy for the narrator and her chums.

Apparently, Dworkin has some trouble finding an American publisher for *Ice and Fire*, and the resulting grudge has its place among her novel's mess of over-articulated discontents. The fate of the narrator's own novel, unsurprisingly, "strangely resembles" that of Dworkin's:

The book has been finished now. Many publishers have refused to publish it. There is virtually no one left to despise it, insult it, malign it, refuse it; and yet I have been refining it, each and every night, writing until dawn. Now I am tired and the book is perfect and I am done, a giant slug, a glob of goo.

Dworkin is mistaken in her belief that by anticipating her critics she has repudiated them.

Legacy of anguish

Neville Shack

ELIE WIESEL
The Fifth Son
220pp. Viking. £9.95.
0670 80830X

In the Jewish calendar, Passover commemorates freedom from slavery: collective memory of hard times and a thankfulness for release. Four sons appear during the course of the *Haggadah*, in which the historical experience and the lessons to be drawn from it are ritually recited. Each son represents a different attitude; the fifth, who does not appear, is dead, insubstantial. For the father in Elie Wiesel's book, this emblem of non-being still lives as an integral part of himself, his son, Ariel, killed in the Holocaust. The boy's death, many years ago, was a tragic blow which still causes the father great anguish; colouring his outlook and making him ineffectually defensive and withdrawn.

The narrator, a younger son, is taken up by the consequence of all this, a Freudian scapegoat in relation to his father, but also entangled in the moral and metaphysical issues left over from Nazi persecution. At college in New York City, his girlfriend, Lisa, a dynamic, Trotskyist Communist, thinks of him as "the most

Backwater burgeoning

Patricia Craig

E.L. KENNEDY
Twelve in Arcady
192pp. Blackstaff/Allison and Busby. £8.95 (paperback, £3.95).
085640 3512

Twelve in Arcady is another novel about growing up poor but undaunted in Northern Ireland – and a most engaging one. The time is the mid-1960s, the setting a reconstituted factory in Co. Antrim, now made into flats, and the narrator Frances Brody, twelve years old and the first-born in a burgeoning family. The book is divided into twelve chapters, one for every month of the year, and by the time we reach December one child has died, another has been born, and the family's fortunes have taken a slight turn for the better. This is due entirely to their own efforts, and in particular to the resourcefulness of the mother, Ethel: resourcefulness and gumption are the two qualities the novel celebrates.

Poverty has dispirited no one in this book; this is one of *Arcady*'s charms. If you lack a winter coat or watertight footwear you don't make a great to-do about it; you wait alertly to see what turns up. A good supply of fortitude is

one characteristic of the region. E. L. Kennedy uses the device of apparent artlessness to temper her social criticisms; the child narrator is in no position to draw any agitating inferences from the facts of daily living she enumerates. In childhood, as Elizabeth Bowen once remarked, nothing is banal – neither putting the pan on for tea, nor raking out a bonfire; and resentment isn't an emotion greatly in evidence either, even if circumstances oblige you to live in a flat lacking ordinary amenities such as bathrooms and running water.

Arcady, and its environs, is the scene of a good many minor dramas, what with neighbours falling over in the snow, children falling into the nearby river, and a tree falling on half the Brody family. The father, Joe, is *not* more feckless in disposition than his wife is, but not devoid of domestic virtues for all that. We're in a world bounded by turf bogs, the neighbourhood pump, the bungalows of the well-off, an all-purpose shop or two, and certain stick bridges across the river – the kind of backwater in which events gain in colour and importance through being local. The focus of interest is a Protestant family, and so – this being Northern Ireland – we have a Twelfth of July episode; however E. L. Kennedy deserves credit for, among other things, depicting a heterogeneous community in which no one is under the spell of sectarianism.

Frenzy and frissons

Valentine Cunningham

ANDREW HARVEY
Burning Houses
214pp. Cape. £9.50.
0224028081

Burning Houses registers a squinting bifocalism of styles and selfhood, which is by turns anxious and cocky. In it two tones, two voices fence, jostle, fall apart, overlap and finally converge. One voice belongs to Charles, little boy lost and footloose, unhappy ever since his older brother touched him up. Now he is writing out a wistful story of undergraduate pash, buggery between essay crises, lust by the Cherwell, Brideshead re-visited, a heap of yearnings wastefully loaded onto Mark, the chum who preferred settling for wife and fatherhood. The other voice belongs to Adolphe, bitchy old queen, the rouged impresario of his theatrically appointed Paris apartment, screaming out a spate of camp exhortations and juicy reminiscences as Charles reads aloud his sad tale.

Andrew Harvey tries very hard with Adolphe to work up a frenzy of disrespectability, opposition to grey normalities, *frissons* of danger, poeticisms *maudis*. But, more and more, Adolphe's cloying devotion to the memory of

reserved, the most inhibited, the most complex-ridden". A dose of 1960s counter-culture only seems to intensify these details. Torment and angst become second nature to him, not so much because of any immediate crisis, but as a result of the weight of the past – "I suffer from an Event I have not even experienced". He soon recognizes that the reasons for his father's rejection of him have deep historical roots. Tragedy will promote its own catharsis; agony serves as prelude to a babble of discourse.

There is an admission that remorse, one of the dark psychological reactions listed here, is unspeakable. When the grim tone does find words to depict cruelty and slaughter, set-piece reminiscences are chilling but wholly stranded, without any integral place in the general picture. The main problem throughout the novel has to do with the range of expression. Speaking the unspeakable proves absurdly over-ambitious, especially where emotional modulation is so woefully jammed; the quality of portrayal is in inverse ratio to its import. Lisa's cute metropolitan insights only cloy the narrator's search for identity, already trite and ponderous enough. When he finally tracks down and confronts the murderous Nazi officer in affluent post-war Germany the account prompts the question: why set up this kind of spiritually rigorous encounter without a correspondingly rigorous grip on the material?

The judges of this year's Booker McConnell Prize will be Anthony Thwaite (Chairman), Edna Healey, Isabel Quigly, Gillian Reynolds and Bernice Rubens. Publishers are asked to submit entries as soon as possible.

Moments of commitment

J.K.L. Walker

JEREMY BROOKS
Doing the Voices
160pp. Viking/Salamander. £9.95.
0948681 012

Jeremy Brooks established his reputation with two novels about rebellious adolescence: *Jam-pot Smith* (1960), a story about a group of fifth-formers in wartime Wales, and a sequel, *Smith, As Hero* (1965), a high-spirited comedy of Service life. Smith and his friends made an earlier appearance in a short story, "I'll Fight You", published in 1958 and now reprinted as the first of the four stories that make up *Doing the Voices*.

The setting is once again a Welsh resort in the early years of the last war, and the story centres on a shop-lifting expedition to the local Woolworth's. Planned and carried out with military precision under the command of Smith's friend Epsom, the raid serves too an imagined military end, the "requisitioning" of *matériel* for the mountain hideout from which the group aims to resist the expected German invasion. This kind of William Brown plotting was not without a certain grim plausibility in 1940, but a year or two later, when the story may be presumed to take place, the edge had gone off things. Epsom finds his squad less ready to face the ten-mile slog across the hills; there is more fun to be had with records and

girls in the Music Room. When, following the raid, the crippled Dewi upbraids Smith for his unfeeling treatment of his girl-friend Kathy, and offers to fight him, Epsom's martial resolve falters; while, conversely, Smith's undecided feelings towards the girl take on resolution. In a cool and startling final paragraph, Brooks presses home the point that the day has been a formative one in the two boys' lives.

The moment of commitment for an indecisive temperament forms the crux, too, of "Wrong Play", a story about a group of actors, old friends, who meet one summer evening in a Stratford-upon-Avon pub. The narrator, Cliff, unsuccessful as an actor ("Jesus, old mate, you never even carried a spear with conviction. You wanted to know why you were carrying it") is now making a second career as a photographer, but has fallen out with his girl-friend Julie over her growing commitment to the Women's Peace Movement. Quoting Keats, he claims that "the only way of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing", but this is coolly received. The party drives out through the lush Warwickshire countryside to visit a small travelling circus camped in the corner of a large field. It is an innocent, child-like affair, as befits its audience, but the visitors are moved by the simple acts of the two owner-performers, notably by the courage of the elderly Ma Sproat. Cliff's own feelings focus on Julie rather than the Sproats; the warmth of her response to them arouses in him a new depth of emotion towards

her. Like Smith in the earlier story, he has fallen in love; not, however, as the result of a challenge to personal morality, but at second hand, through observing what emotional commitment to a cause or to others can entail. Without some matching opening-up on his part he would, Julie tells him back in the Stratford pub, have run the risk of being ditched. The story thus appears to embody a newer, more diffuse morality, perhaps at root more political, than that of "I'll Fight You": learning to be a committed sort of person rather than being committed to a person.

"A Value" (first published in 1975), about a near-blind Soho poet and his obsession, is more overtly literary in form and reference. To Macphee, deranged by what he sees as the corruption of values in modern society, the commonplace book – crammed with carefully juxtaposed quotations in his minute handwriting – that he carries on his daily round of the Soho pubs, is a bomb capable of destroying the world. Slackly handled, the theme could have floated off into the higher pretentiousness, but Brooks keeps it firmly anchored in the everyday as Macphee sniffs his way through the crowded streets, bouncing off tolerant barmaids, pimps, prostitutes and policemen. Dense with literary references and symbols, "A Value" is a satisfying blend of the comic and the allusive that reaches an appropriately mock-apocalyptic conclusion in the public gallery of the House of Commons.

In "Doing the Voices", the longest story in

In the end, his life threatened, there is nothing for it but to flee to the safety of a more settled society: "Flight had become necessary, and it would be a penniless flight. . . . He could leave with nothing. It was the price for years of opulent celebrity in a little place going wrong."

The threat comes from the black, dispossessed majority – the so-called underclass. Hari Bahary, of Indian extraction like the author himself, is marginal to the society. He can have no permanent place in it. So it is with the hero of the aptly titled story, "Insecurity". One son is already at university in Canada; another is soon to follow. They badger him into buying a house in Toronto, ostensibly as a business proposition, but in reality as a symbol of their intention to stay. It is only after he has signed the necessary papers that he realizes what has happened: "He could hope for death here but his grandchildren, maybe even his children, would continue the emigration which his grandfather had started in India, and during which the island had proved, in the end, to be nothing more than a stop-over."

But life in a more settled society has its own price: the insecurity which has led to the flight has merely become internalized, like a disease the refugees are condemned to carry around with them. The symptoms erupt every now and

then in acts of bravado designed to prove their worth to themselves: "Ram put his hand to his nose, blow twice, rub the cold between his fingers and then wipe his fingers clean on the white man's sweater." And all this because the man had objected to the loud music of the inevitable Saturday night get-together. The behaviour of people operating under these pressures is not a pretty sight.

Their political rhetoric is even uglier. V. S. Naipaul, in an essay on Conrad, has written of "the simplicity of beliefs and the hideous simplicity of actions" that are a feature of "half-made societies that (seem) doomed to remain half-made". In "The Revolutionary" the narrator is accosted by a fellow-countryman in the snack bar of a Canadian university and is forced to listen to his "ideas" about the future of their country: "My job is to go in like a hurricane and destroy the blood-sucking superstructure of the whole fascist-capitalist regime in the place. All I have to do is destroy everything – free the masses – and then I'll leave, after doing my socialist duty."

Neil Bissonndath, like Naipaul before him, has set out to chart the lives of those who are forced to live on the edge of life; like Naipaul's, the picture he paints is a dismal and depressing one.

On the edge

Adewale Maja-Pearce

NEIL BISSONNATH
Digging Up the Mountains: Selected stories
247pp. Deutsch. £8.95.
0233 978518

And then another thought chilled him: But it's happening here too. This country around him was beginning to crack. The angry words, the petty hatreds, the attitude not of living off the land but of raping it. He had seen it before, been through it before, and much more, more that was still to come, until a time when, even from here, the heaven now, people would begin to flee.

Thus the central character in "Veins Visible", one of the fourteen stories in this accomplished first collection by a young Trinidadian writer. Flight, and the insecurity that it entails, are the dominant themes of all the stories. In the title story Hari Bahary, the prosperous owner of a string of boutiques, watches helplessly as the island of his birth is gradually engulfed in violent upheaval: "The island . . . was no longer that in which his father had lived. Its simplicity, its unsophistication, had vanished over the years and had been replaced by the cynical politics of corruption that plagued all the urchin nations scrambling in the larger world."

Mores under strain

Andrew Robinson

PATRICIA ANGADI
The Done Thing
245pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0375 037814

The Done Thing has an unusual relationship at its centre; the romance and marriage between the vulnerable, artlessly talented daughter of stuffy Home Counties parents and a penniless Indian student with intellectual pretensions. The period and setting – war-time London – long before the arrival of facile multiculturalism and Indian restaurants around the corner, makes the novel doubly interesting, when taken with the obviously autobiographical elements from Patricia Angadi's own life. After an upbringing that included presentation at Court she herself married "an Indian writer, lecturer, Trotskyite and intellectual", as does her central character, "Heather Hamilton Jones, and she became a portrait painter, involved in the dissemination of Indian culture in

1950s Britain, as does Heather.

Whatever the source, Angadi's writing is filled with acute observations of English mores under strain. She begins with an amusing description of Heather's wedding in a London registry office in 1942 in the face of absolute family disapproval. Just before the ceremony she is taken aside and warned by the Registrar: "Miss Jones, you do know, do you not, that Mr Hiremath's religion allows him to take more than one wife?", to which she responds spiritedly: "Of course I know that he *could*; just let him try, that's all." At the end, twenty years later, after five children and two affairs, she has come to accept her tacit separation, and her husband's version of polygamy with his Danish secretary and an Indian dancer, without resentment.

The different reactions of her English friends and relations and the way these change with time are subtly handled. Mohendra Hiremath himself has an air of insouciant ethnocentrism and a belief in himself that is fatally attractive to Heather. She finds him both exotic and erotic. One suspects that more than a little of the late Tambimuttu went into him. He

has endless schemes to make a lasting impact on the world, and less importantly, an income to support a family. These inevitably lead him back to India and to his village, from which he has been away a great many years, unable to face a return there without solid achievements. Heather receives long letters full of promises of a bright future which he assumes automatically she will share. And finally she agrees to visit India and meet his family for a few brief weeks with her worldly-wise, very English brood in tow. She knows very little about it in advance, perhaps surprisingly, but her trip is not unpleasant; it simply feels unreal, and Mohendra, wrapped up in new visions of glory and some accommodating women, has no idea of her feelings.

It is very much Heather's story. Her husband is something like Forster's Dr Aziz might have been if he had gone to Britain as a medical student and stayed on. But unfortunately he lacks the sensitivity, delicacy and sheer culture of Aziz, while sharing his child-like immaturity which can stand in the way of full acceptance by Indians. This seems a definite weakness in an otherwise accomplished second novel.

this collection, Brooks reverts to his earlier concern with individual conscience. Here, the comic aspects of the eternally self-questioning liberal are embodied in Harry's past failure as a circus clown because of his inability to settle for being either the melancholy Pierrot or the extroverted Harlequin. But he is sharp and quick-witted, can "do the voices" and pass as educated, and, thus, after a period as a fairground "gaff-lad", lands himself a job supervising affairs at the country estate of Sir Henry Luke, a City millionaire, to whom he presents every weekend a largely fictitious report. The Hall, though, as Maureen, the Irish maid points out, is largely a fiction in its owner's mind. "Real gentry don't have ladies' maids and kitchen staff and market gardens and gamekeepers and estate stewards. They can't afford it, they spend all their money trying to keep the rain out of their family homes." At the tawdry feudal Christmas Eve party, to which the story leads up, everyone in fact is "doing the voices", staff and family alike. Brooks has a great deal of fun at the expense of this over-populated fairy-land, but in the end Harry finds himself pushed into a corner which forces him to resign the job. Taking Maureen with him, he sets off once more on his travels, walking at peace through the lanes beside his ancient Rolls, docile under the hand-throttle, and towing his caravan. It's a humorous and engaging resolution for the man of conscience. Moral: keep a bit of money in the Post Office and take good care of the horse.

Throughout this enjoyable and lucidly written collection, Brooks maintains a level-headed, ruefully aware control of his characters and situations. Everyday life, he implies, moves on through small but significant moral decisions by individuals – in this way, happy endings, in fact and fiction, may be arrived at, without sentimentality. This is refreshing and warming, like a good cup of tea: *Doing the Voices*, in this English way, cheers but does not inebriate, and bears a flavour of truth sometimes lacking in stronger concoctions.

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MEIC STEPHENS (Compiler and editor)
The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales
682pp. Oxford University Press. £17.50.
0192115863

Meic Stephens's *Companion to the Literature of Wales* is for the English-speaking reader: a Welsh edition, in which some subjects, such as the technical complexities of Welsh poetry, are more fully discussed, is published by the University of Wales Press.

Treating as it does almost fifteen hundred years of literature written in two distinct and often rival languages (three if we include Latin), the book is of necessity somewhat broken-backed. The entry on Alun Richards illustrates the difficulties involved: "he rejects the portrayal of a romanticized Welsh past of anecdote and myth and is more concerned with the contemporary Wales of rugby, beauty queens, television, the language question, and the valleys of Glamorgan in industrial and spiritual decline". On the one hand we have lovingly scholarly articles on Dafydd ap Gwilym and the Laws of Hywel Dda, and on the other, entries on individual rugby players (this seems a little excessive; it is difficult to imagine the Oxford Companion to English Literature including articles on cricketers) and the Merthyr Rising: the last event in the concluding "Chronology of the History of Wales" is the blunt "1984-5: The Miners' Strike". If allocation of space is anything to go by, the editor, while being scrupulously fair to the medievalists, seems to share Richards's preferences: the article on the Merthyr Rising is longer than that on Cynghanedd (which is, for once, clearly and beautifully explained for the general reader, "that legendary cretin" as Dylan Thomas so felicitously called him) and the article on Marxism is considerably longer than that on Cerdd Dafod (the traditional rules of the poet's art). How to live warrants more space than how to write.

Most of the articles are on individual authors, and the editor has cast his net very wide indeed. The advantage of this is that the great rub shoulders with the obscure and the eccentric: among the Evanses for example there are fascinating articles on Evan Evans the scholar friend of Dr Johnson and on John Evans, a cartographer who was sent to find a Welsh-speaking tribe of American Indians — he mapped the upper Missouri, only to die in New Orleans at twenty-nine; we also see G. E. Evans rapped peremptorily over the knuckles: "it is a matter for regret among students of the oral traditions of Wales that George Ewart Evans, a Welsh speaker, was unable to do for his own country what he has done in so many splendid books for East Anglia". And we learn about John Evans "the Royal high cockle poet", a Welsh McGonagall. Some of the best articles, like that on William Morgan, the sixteenth-century translator of the Bible into Welsh, are written as advocacy, and very persuasive advocacy too, rather than as the simple presentation of information.

But though Meic Stephens claims that "I have tried to avoid giving the impression that all my geese are swans" a great many of the articles — particularly on twentieth-century poets — give exactly this impression. The evaluations of Dylan Thomas and, especially, Vernon Watkins, will seem to many readers absurdly high and such a large number of modern poets is included that one almost feels publication of a single volume of verse has been thought sufficient qualification for an entry. Such boosterism, as American English calls the practice, can only be counterproductive, drawing attention away from quality to quantity, from excellence to nationality.

There are a few omissions: Dafydd's *A Tour through England and Wales* has no separate entry (though it is briefly mentioned in the article "Tours of Wales"); there is no entry for Thomas Phaer who wrote his translation of the Aeneid in Pembrokeshire, ending every book with the words *In Foresta Kilgeran*, while he was working as a lawyer trying to "reconcile" the ancient Welsh law of Hywel Dda with current sixteenth-century English usage. Though earlier than non-literary subjects must be largely a matter of taste, Owen John, probably the

finest painter Wales has produced, surely deserves more than the single sentence tacked on to the end of the entry on her brother Augustus.

A particularly interesting series of entries deals with folk customs such as "Courtin' in Bed" (not quite as exciting as it sounds), many of them involving singing and/or poetry (eg "Pwco", a competition of impromptu verses between a groom and his bride's family; "shim-li", a stable-loft singing and "noson lawen" — all social gatherings at which singing was the main form of entertainment — singing to oxen, and summer carols). If the reader detects a tone of rather strident nationalism in some of the articles, the entry dealing with the customary use of the "Welsh Not" goes a long way towards explaining this: "a piece of wood or slate with the letters W. N. cut into it. . . It was hung around the neck of a pupil caught speaking Welsh until he or she, in turn, could pass it on to another, the pupil wearing it at the end of the day being punished by the teacher". In the face of such brutal condescension, and worse, the writing can seem remarkably temperate, even allowing itself some welcome moments of humour as when we are told of one poet (Sion Cain, c1575-c1650) that he "complained that the practice of the poetic craft had declined, a view born out by a comparison of his work with that of his father".

The editing is in general meticulous, though there are a few misprints, and some oversights: for example a bishop and saint called Samson is frequently referred to in articles on other saints and clerics, but there is no article on him; there is a cross-reference (under the entry for Keener, Fred) to the football team the Bluebirds, though there is no entry on the team; a sentence in the middle of the article on Y Cyfeirdd (the early poets) seems to have a clause missing from it.

Mythologies

I like that story with its thoughtful prisoner,
miles of salt marsh and a word like *wesh*
I could never figure —
those chalk sticks making buckled letters
on slates the colour
of a schoolgirl's knickers

then the sour cloth you wiped the slate with.
There was something in it, too,
about a jack —
jack-knife, jack-towel, jack,
words for lawyers
perhaps
or dead geraniums
waiting to be topped.

I read it in my oral childhood —
some daft ould map
had joined the Farce's mouth
to the mainland

so I could cross that bridge like Satan
and hide among
the British people
not noticing their love of dog-smells

fairgrounds
pub signs
smoked dukes
most anything at all with bottom in it.

Also the stadijms where they moan and thresh

they moan and sigh
like knobby forests.

For this was like an almost-love
some love you never chose
you wipe your nose just
come back for more
and print heat lies.

TOM PAULIN

Native and foreign streams

Gilbert Ruddock

RACHEL BROMWICH (Editor and translator)
Dafydd ap Gwilym: A selection of poems
207pp. Penguin. £5.95.
014 0076131
RACHEL BROMWICH
Aspects of the Poetry of Dafydd ap Gwilym:
Collected papers
177pp. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
£12.95.
07083 09054

Thomas Parry's magisterial edition of the poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym in 1952 gave renewed impetus to the study and appreciation of one of the great medieval European poets. Like Chaucer, his contemporary, Dafydd has much to offer the modern reader. He spans a wide range of human experience and has not become "dated" like some authors of a lesser degree. Rachel Bromwich's translations of his work have won considerable acclaim, and this new Penguin edition (the cover reads *Selected Poems of Dafydd ap Gwilym*) should introduce his genius to a still wider audience than that reached by the original publication in 1982. The volume contains, on facing pages with Dr Parry's Welsh text, English translations of fifty-six poems — about a third of the poet's accepted canon. The poems are arranged thematically in seven sections and represent fairly his main themes of love, nature, nobility and meditation on life and death. Excellent notes are appended to the poems of each section. Advantage has not been taken of this new edition to expand the introduction, which is, in parts, rather too concise. Nevertheless, it does succeed in conveying many basic facts about the poet's craft, themes and literary background.

Bromwich claims rather modestly to have aspired no higher than to provide a serviceable translation in good and readable English, in so far as this is consistent with accuracy. The aim is to assist the reader towards an accurate interpretation and appreciation of the original. This new edition contains important amendments to some of the English versions of the poems. In order to secure for herself the maximum freedom to convey the meaning of the original as accurately as possible, Bromwich, who has often emphasized the difficulties of translating Dafydd ap Gwilym, adopts "straight prose" as her medium. I would certainly not agree with Anthony Conran (in reviewing the translations in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*; 1984) that they are "bad free verse", but neither are they "straight prose". To fault them, as Conran did, for not being "literary" and creative is to criticize them for not being something they were never intended to be. Notwithstanding an occasional quaintness of effect, these translations succeed admirably in conveying the semantic and structural features of the original poems. They also reveal Bromwich as a sensitive interpreter of Dafydd's work who is by no means a prisoner of her own pedantic scholarship.

The *Collected Papers* contain important revised and edited versions of material published between 1963 and 1982. The six chapters, three of which were originally written in Welsh, exhibit an enviable combination of unassailable scholarship and sensitive literary criticism. Chapter One, comprising about a third of the volume, first appeared in booklet form in 1974 and was intended as a brief general account of Dafydd ap Gwilym for the uninformed reader. The other chapters are of a more specialist nature and often amplify points made in the first chapter. Although this leads to a fair amount of repetition, it is all part of a logical progression towards more detailed definition that mirrors the development of the author's research and gives her book a special unity.

The poet's supreme achievement, says Bromwich, was the integration and synthesizing in his poetry of multiple streams of tradition of disparate origin. The influence of the oral tradition of Welsh bardic poetry upon Dafydd is obvious, but the innovative nature of his verse stems largely from his use of Continental themes. Bromwich has re-defined several of the basic problems in this respect and has clarified the picture, for example, regarding likely French and Ovidian influences from written sources. She places particular emphasis on the role played by the *clér*, or lower-grade poets, who may have constituted a major channel whereby foreign literary influences could have reached Dafydd orally. The multilingual nature of the Norman boroughs with which he was so familiar would have been particularly conducive to foreign literary influences of various kinds. Of particular relevance regarding native and foreign influences are the chapters on the poet's connection with the *Bard Grammar* and his allusions to secular narrative. Dr Bromwich regards the early evolution of the *cywydd* metre as being attributable to the activities of a group of poets rather than to Dafydd himself, and in this respect her final chapter on his contemporaries is most valuable. Her book also contains constant references to Irish literature, thus keeping the wider Celtic context in view.

These two volumes are a mine of scholarship and constitute the best possible introduction to the literary characteristics and relationships of one of the great poets of medieval Europe. They should make rewarding reading for scholar and layman alike.

In the preface to his collection of essays on Anglo-Welsh literature, *A Ride Through the Wood* (320pp. Poetry Wales Press. £2.95. 0 907476 50 3), Roland Mathias writes that Anglo-Welsh literature is a wood, seen by most critics as being on the periphery of the map of English literature; Mathias asserts that he is in possession of a different map, "one on which the wood appears much closer to the centre". The range of his essays — divided into two parts, "The main ride" and "Smaller clearings" — stretches from Henry Vaughan to Emyr Humphries, taking in along the way nineteenth-century Welsh poets, plus Vernon Watkins, Dylan Thomas, David Jones, R. S. Thomas, and ending with a glance at Anglo-Welsh literary magazines.

The villain-hero unmasks

Patrick McCarthy

LOUIS-FERDINAND CÉLINE
Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois
278pp. Paris: Gallimard. 98fr.
207 005110
HENRI GODARD
Poétique de Céline
474pp. Paris: Gallimard. 145fr.
207 005005
FRANÇOIS GIBAUT
Céline: Tome 2, 1932-1944, Délitres et persécutions
378pp. Paris: Mercure de France. 149fr.
27152 13336
PIERRE ASSOULINE
L'Épuration des intellectuels
175pp. Brussels: Editions Complexe.
287027 1670

Maudits soupirs pour une autre fois is an early version of *Féerie pour une autre fois* and of *Normance* or *Féerie II*. Toiling through a thousand pages of Céline's often illegible handwriting, Henri Godard has assembled a text that begins with Clémence Arlon's visit, depicts the Royal Air Force bombing of Montmartre and concludes with the narrator's quest to find a safe place for his manuscripts before he flees to Denmark. Godard is apologetic because this is not a critical edition, but *Maudits soupirs* is so interesting that it deserves a wide and not merely a specialist audience. Moreover the frequent blanks and the notes indicating that the manuscript contains two or three words instead of one, or that names are being changed, remind us of Céline's finished novels, where the text often corrects itself in order to warn the reader that the seeming perfection of the traditional literary work is a mystification.

In one respect *Maudits soupirs* is better than *Féerie*. There Clémence Arlon visits the narrator, Ferdinand, because he is about to be murdered by the Resistance; curiosity about other people's demise is a familiar but banal theme in Céline's work. Here she comes because she has copies of his books and she wants him to sign them, which he will not do. The notion that the written language is alienating is widespread in modern thought, but few have gone as far as Céline in identifying writing with a criminal act of violence. So Ferdinand refuses to sign his name or to take responsibility for his books and, when eventually he does so, the RAF arrive and the bombing begins.

This episode is less good than *Normance* although the villain-hero is the same: Ferdinand's other self, Jules, the painter who has "a forelock like Hitler's" and who orchestrates the bombing, turning Paris into one of his canvases. But Jules's seduction of Lili, who as a ballet dancer incarnates the liberating power of art, is missing and the dance-like structure of *Normance*, where different artists gain control in turn, has still to be worked out (it is surprising that no choreographer has turned *Normance* into a ballet). In particular the superb scene where the actor Le Vigan takes over and transforms Paris into a silent film was invented later.

Féerie contains a long monologue delivered by Céline from his Danish prison and there are echoes of it in the last segment of *Maudits soupirs*, but the principal narrator is the Ferdinand who prowls the Montmartre streets in 1944. Interwoven with depictions of Céline's friends like Marcel Aymé, who appeared to Céline the model of the clever writer, is a lament for the past Montmartre. As so often in Céline's books this nostalgia is not very convincing because there seems to be so little in the past that is worth conserving. Céline may or may not have been a Fascist but he was no Tory. The *Féerie* monologue where the demonic writer gains revenge on his persecutors by imposing his language on theirs is better, but there is a hint of this motif in *Maudits soupirs* where the manuscripts are to be saved so that Céline's vision of history — or rather his legend, for one of the manuscripts is the Krogod saga — may out the Resistance version.

In *Poétique de Céline*, Godard argues that Céline's ideology stands in contrast to his "écriture". Where the former has as its ideal a repressive society founded on discipline and order, the latter liberates the reader from the straitjacket of literary French. Entering the

familiar argument about whether slang is a language of submission, associated with social groups so subjugated as to be incapable of reflection, or a rebellion against bourgeois language and hence the bourgeois order (this debate took place in Italy around Pasolini's novels), Godard opts for the second view. He also points out that Céline writes not in popular French but in a literary language which is rooted in popular French and which contains as well as an emotional impact an intellectual component that is revealed in Céline's manuscripts by a quest for the word that has not merely the precise meaning he wants but also the correct rhythm. The aim of this flood of slang is "to unmask": to free the reader from false idealisms and to force him to confront his mortality.

Drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin, to whom the novel is a "dialogue of languages", Godard analyses Céline's plurilingualism. In *Mort d'été*, for example, the young Ferdinand's slang marks a rejection of his parents' language, which consists of a half-successful attempt to speak correct French. Their speech reflects their social situation: as members of the lower middle-class, they aspire to a gentility that society refuses them. So Ferdinand's speech unmasks the ambiguity of his parents' place in the bourgeois order.

These are only two of the languages in *Mort d'été*, others being the scientific outpourings of Courtial des Pereires, which exist to be parodied, and the English words which young Ferdinand — in another act of defiance — refuses to learn. More complex is the medievalism found in the snatches of the Krogod legend, which may offer parallels with Ferdinand's slang, since it is equally removed from literary French, as established in the seventeenth century and continued in the present. The kinship indicates that Ferdinand's discourse also constitutes a legend because it rebuffs the spurious rationality implied by literary discourse. Once more one is reminded of Pasolini who wrote both in the "coarse" slang of the Rome sub-proletariat and in the "pure dialect" of the Friulan peasants.

Godard's other thesis is that Céline is particularly concerned with the brand of idealism which allows the novel to be perceived as an autonomous world. Rejecting this, he installs

in his works a narrator who grows ever more obtrusive from *Féerie* on. Who is this "I"? It is none other than Céline, who recounts the adventures that Louis-Ferdinand Destouches has lived through and who also presents himself as the novelist toiling over blank paper. The admission that he is writing strips away the mystique that traditionally surrounds literary production, which explains not merely the self-corrections of Céline's texts but phrases such as "I'm not telling you everything" or "I'd forgotten this". Further to demythologize it Céline talks about the novel as merchandise: he tells us how much money he hopes to make from *Féerie* or how badly his publisher treats him. He also drags in the reader, who is usually perceived as an enemy.

The bid to lay bare the real and disreputable workings of literary production is another reason why Céline fascinates contemporary critics, although one retains lingering doubts about Godard's view that he revitalized fiction by rooting it in autobiography. The Céline of the novels is, after all, a very different figure from the man Destouches, whose stable years at Rennes do not appear in the works. Where Godard is right in this thoughtful, thorough book is that the supposedly autobiographical elements are a rhetorical device that gives greater credence to the hallucinatory pages, which the reader is less able to shrug off as "fiction".

The second volume of François Gibault's biography, which covers the pre-war and war years, appears after the third volume and may have been held back by Céline's wife or because author and publisher feared it would stir fresh controversy about his political role. But, although Gibault has new information and writes well, he does not fundamentally alter our view of Céline. By the late 1930s he was, as Gibault reiterates, "completely obsessed" by the so-called Jewish question, and during the Occupation he described the Jews as vermin when the Nazis were treating them as such. *Bagatelles pour un massacre* was republished in 1943 and Céline bears his share of the blame for creating a climate where French Jews could be shipped off to the death-camps. It is also true that Céline was convinced that the Aryans would lose and that in general the Nazi occupiers were unable to make use of him. He had

one friend among them — Karl Epting — and he was on good terms with leading collaborators like Alphonse de Chateaubriand and the *Je suis partout* team, but when he exerted his influence to prevent the Germans from confiscating a stock of gold he had tucked away in a Dutch bank failed, and on an official visit to Berlin he spent much time complaining about the number of Jews in the German civil service.

Seeking relief from the war he went frequently to Brittany where he met the pro-Nazi separatist leader, Olier Mordrel. But Céline had little faith in the Celts either and he was convinced that the Red Army would soon be marching into Wales and Ireland. Masked by such wilful hysteria was a practical strain that would enable him to survive. He had another stock of gold in Denmark and as early as 1941 he was planning to flee to Copenhagen. After Stalingrad he thought of little else and when this volume ends he is about to begin a journey that will take him away from the purge and across the ruins of the Reich. Gibault's concluding pages contain a marvellous document: an Author Information Sheet sent to Céline by a post-war American publisher. Under the heading "noteworthy events in your past" Céline lists "war and jail", while to the question what were his "hopes, dreams and ambitions" he replies: "Nothing" [sic].

Céline is a fringe actor in Pierre Assoulène's book on the purge, *L'Épuration des intellectuels* contains little that is new but comes to the correct conclusion that what you did during the Occupation may have mattered less than when you went on trial for it. Robert Brasillach, who was tried in January 1945, was executed, whereas the rest of the *Je suis partout* team, who had fled and gained eighteen precious months, escaped the death penalty. Assoulène depicts the trials of Béraud, Maurras and Hérold-Paquis and he describes Drieu's suicide, Camus's heartsearchings and Jean Paulhan's ability to see a million sides to any question. Assoulène also offers useful addenda, like the text of Article 75 which served as the legal basis for much of the purge. Article 75 is a motif in *Féerie*, where Céline plays with it and with other numbers — notably those of the prison cells — in order to demonstrate how the demonic writer imposes his language on the false rationality invoked by his enemies.

The crisp and the rank

David Coward

STENDHAL
Armance
Translated by C. K. Scott Moncrieff
252pp. Soho Book Company, 1 Brewer Street,
London W1. Paperback, £5.95.
0948166 037
EUGENE FROMENTIN
Donnigue
Translated by Sir Edward Marsh
250pp. Soho Book Company, 1 Brewer Street,
London W1. Paperback, £4.95.
0948166 061

Armance (1827), Stendhal's first novel, is a puzzler. It takes Octave sixteen chapters to realize that he loves Armance with a passion that is hopeless because it is, in some dark fashion, forbidden. Fifteen chapters and several creakily plotted crises later, he marries her briefly before sailing away to Greece, where, decorously but for undisclosed reasons, he swallows a fatal mixture of opium and digitalis. Poor Armance, who interests Stendhal much less than the unpredictable Octave, is left to take the veil.

Romantic heroes often behave oddly, of course, but Octave's posturing and his yearning for an absolute to counter the *ennui* and vulgarity of modern life are alone insufficient to account for the depth of his self-disgust. Stendhal's other heroes may despise their own weaknesses, but their urge to live in harmony with their discoverable selves is a positive function of their energies. Octave is violent and suffers self-doubts too terrible to tell. In a sense, he symbolizes the decadence of the Restoration *haut monde*, though Stendhal disingenuously disclaims any political intentions which are always as intrusive "as a pistol fired at a concert". Perhaps the ambiguity of

Octave's motives stems from unresolved tensions between a classical reticence of manner and the romantic surgings of extravagant sensibilities.

On the other hand, the problems may lie with Stendhal's irony, which, in the form of embarrassed apologies and insincere excuses, undermines not only his hero's finest gestures but also his own values. Octave tries to explain, but he gets no further than mentioning his bizarre aversion to marriage and the awareness of being a "monster". Stendhal is no more forthcoming than his hero and were it not for an explicit letter to Mérimée (reprinted here as a very necessary appendix) the mystery would have remained inviolate. For Octave is impotent, and his anguish derives from an acute sense of the limits imposed upon his spiritual aspirations by the impurity of his body. His story is tragic, though Stendhal's dry, sly commentaries banish any hint of the morbid. *Armance* is an odd, flawed novel — "very faulty", its author said — but the tone of sympathetic mockery, and Stendhal's sharp eye for human and social absurdities, are delights which more than compensate for its deficiencies.

While Stendhal is crisp and cool, Fromentin's *Donnigue* (1863) is a late fruit of rank Romanticism. Largely an autobiographical transposition of Fromentin's well-remembered love for a married woman, it is an elegiac tale of renunciation. It has a unique place in French literature not for its desultory plot and rather pompous cast, but for its sonorous and exact prose style. Fromentin, who was an exhibited artist and a noted art critic, had a painter's eye and a poet's ear. His grand manner may now seem over-ripe, but few writers have ever summoned such graphic and affecting images of weeping skies, desolate salt-marshes and Atlantic rollers beating on rocky coasts. His memory was for sensations rather than for events, and his mastery of descriptive

prose frequently outruns the novelist's duty to create dramatic tension. *Donnigue* is long on mood but short on pace and its main appeal is to a capacity for verbal imagination which we have largely lost. Yet it remains more than a period piece: it is a remarkably precise and vivid record of intensely perceived experience.

Both Stendhal and Fromentin are excellently served by their translators. Scott Moncrieff's 1928 version keeps *Armance* on a tight rein yet manages to find enough room to strike a note of appropriately Stendhalian feyness. Sir Edward Marsh, with the harder task, occasionally loses his rhythm and does not quite match the unctious of Fromentin in full poetic cry. Even so, his *Donnigue*, which first appeared in 1948, is as deft and full-flavoured as the original deserves.

Recently re-published in paperback is *The Flanders Road* by the 1985 Nobel prize-winner, Claude Simon (translated by Richard Howard. 231pp. Calder. £5.95. 0 78145 3994 5). When this translation was first published in 1962, the *TLS* reviewer wrote, "out of all this apparent welter of words, significance does reward perseverance. Descriptions of a nocturnal cavalcade in unending rain are composed in a memorable rhythm of prose, which retains in the excellent translation its singing quality . . .". *The Flanders Road* is a book of great quality, elusive and simultaneously compelling, obstinately defying any neat pigeonholing or precision of definition." Also republished are Simon's 1973 novel, *Triptych*, translated by Helen R. Lane (171pp. Calder. £4.95. 0 7145 3787 X) and two novels by Marguerite Duras: *The Sailor from Gibraltair*, translated by Barbara Bray (318pp. Calder. £5.95. 0 7145 0511 0), from 1952, and *The Little Horses of Tasquinia*, translated by Peter DuBerg (214pp. Calder. £4.95. 0 7145 0348 7), from 1953.

Relatively rational

Michael Carrithers

JOANNA OVERLING (Editor)
Reason and Morality
277pp. Tavistock. £16.50 (paperback, £8.50).
0422 79810 X

If India's civilization can be explained through its preoccupation with purity and impurity, our own could be explained through our obsession with rationality and irrationality. That the idea of reason can be more emotive than reasonable is evident from the Victorian use of this powerful collective idea to embody social divisions: not only were women and madmen regarded as deficient in reason, so was most of the rest of the world. European superiority seemed all the more obvious because our sustained and spectacularly successful technological reasoning was equated with our collective values: the greater the machines, the greater the civilization.

Though now couched in different terms, this constellation of ideas is still vigorous, both as lowest common received opinion and as a philosophical presupposition. Indeed, our technology has grown yet more effective (if less controllable), and our dominant cultural idea of reason closer to technological reason. Hence it is not easy to clear our minds in the matter or to find a less arrogant alternative. In one way or another almost every contributor to *Reason and Morality* agrees that the way forward is to show that other cultures are not irrational.

Attacks on singularity

Colin Gordon

J. G. MERQUIOR
Foucault
188pp. Collins Fontana. £17.95 (paperback, £3.50).
000 1971808
BARRY SMART
Michel Foucault
150pp. Ellis Horwood/Tavistock. Paperback, £3.95.
0853128820
JOHN RAJCHMAN
Michel Foucault: The freedom of philosophy
125pp. Columbia University Press. £22.
0231 06070 X

The chief novelty of the "Modern Masters" volume on Foucault by the Brazilian political scientist J. G. Merquior is the extensive space it devotes to reviewing the secondary literature: considerably more, in some cases, than is spent on setting out Foucault's own ideas. His publisher calls his assessment "uninhibited"; this is the least one can say of its language, with its references to "queers" and "loonies". A flow of sprightly if inconsequential chatter seems Merquior's natural forte: Bergson's lectures "were attended by crowds"; Koyré "spent regular spells at Princeton"; Merquior interviewed Foucault "at his new home in rue Vaugirard".

Merquior says he has "tried in earnest to give as fair a hearing as possible" to Foucault. Much of this hearing is given over to prosecution witnesses called to expose Foucault's deficiencies as a scholar. Less hostile commentators of Foucault tend to be cited only when "even" they have doubts, when they can be made to sound compromisingly casual about facts, or when they disagree. Few writers who have attacked Foucault are denied Merquior's courteous certification of their shrewdness and perceptivity; their testimony is guaranteed unquestioning credence. Foucault, Merquior asserts, has no respect for objective truth: to contradict him, it appears, is to refute him. Merquior says Foucault is prone to "a disconcerting habit of evading instead of confronting critical objections". This allegation follows a citation of some criticisms of *Discipline and Punish* made by Jacques Léonard in *L'impossible Prison*. Merquior neglects here to signal the existence, let alone the substance of Foucault's extended reply to Léonard published in that same volume. No mention is

The volume is the proceedings of a conference held in 1984 on the major theme of "Rationality", along with the minor theme of Bronislaw Malinowski's centenary. The form of rationality most immediately in question was that discussed by the philosophers who wrote in the collective volume, *Rationality and Relativism*, published in 1982 under the editorship of Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes. The contributors to that volume argued about whether there is one standard of rationality by which all, or most, human activities must be judged, or whether there are many rationalities, no one of which is privileged over the others.

Three anthropologists here - Anne Salmond, Mark Hobart and Joanna Overling - deal directly with *Rationality and Relativism*. They agree that most of its contributors came down unacceptably hard on the side of one privileged, scientific-technological rationality. The title *Reason and Morality* is itself an implied criticism: on the one hand, technological reason is in someone's interest, and should therefore be considered a moral, not just an epistemological matter. On the other hand, reason is not just technological or scientific; people also reason about such matters as morality, law and the conduct of life. These forms of reason cannot be subjected to the same criteria as technological reason.

Salmond's paper shows that the Maoris possessed a full range of institutions and practices which we associate with rationality - academies, debates, canons of evidence and reasoning - to help them understand their own

society and history. Hobart proposes that it is the "Tew" (a rather backward people), with their insistence on being *lanoliar* - that peculiar attribute - who have an idea of reasoning which is grandly abstract and doctrinaire, while the Balinese treat it as more practically inferential.

And Overling uses detail from her South American Indian researches to propose that what she calls "personal kind terms" might be as useful and important as the philosophical notion of natural kinds. These papers present the strong thesis that unfamiliar and apparently irrational notions are not merely figurative - metaphorical, poetical, or mystical ways of speaking - but are actually just as closely reasoned as our own analogous notions.

In fact it seems quite feasible to accept both rigour in thought and the social and historical contingency of such rigour in different "styles of reasoning" (in Ian Hacking's phrase from *Rationality and Relativism*). Thus Paul Hirst argues that reasoning about the insufficiency of evidence led to the decline of witch trials in Europe; reasoning, in other words, can be simultaneously an intellectual process, with its own strict rules, and a social one. Michael Saltman shows how social processes can lead to the emergence of distinct and rigorous forms of legal thought, which then enjoy an autonomous vitality.

In many of these excellent papers the writers accept the rationality posed in the Hollis and Lukes volume as a serious and central question. But Raymond Firth takes a different line: he accepts that rationality is a question, agrees

that other cultures can be rational, but argues that the question is intelligibility. This question can be posed in a Kantian way: given that communication between cultures does in fact happen, what are the grounds of its possibility? I think that in the long run this will be a more fruitful line of research for both anthropology and philosophy.

In the first place - as Firth only hints - it offers a richer imaginative field in which to plant philosophical reasoning. Philosophers often discuss rationality as if the problem was merely one of considering the relations between an individual's separate beliefs, and between those beliefs and the world. When another individual enters this primal scenario, it is only to exchange true or false propositions with the first individual. The consequence of setting the problem in so reduced and individualistic a world is to produce reasoning which is air-tight: compellingly rigorous, but also sealed off from experience.

But when the problem is seen as one of intelligibility we already have at least two persons, who are not only exchanging propositions but also trying to impute to each other motives, intentions, emotions, projects, perhaps whole worlds. This way lie some of the most interesting unanswered questions arising from ethnographic field-work and from the capacity of human beings to "learn" other cultures; and indeed from the problem of artificial intelligence. Firth is gracefully modest about what he discovers in this area of human potential. What else might we discover there?

ated by an esoteric literary romanticism. The "freedom of philosophy" means what Foucault calls "se déprendre de soi-même", the constant questioning of what we think we are. Rajchman gives a reasonable account of this idea, defending the ethics of Foucault's position against Habermas (whom he rather unfairly portrays as a Party theoretician). Unfortunately, he also thinks that the freedom of philosophy is our only real freedom, a view which was certainly not held by Foucault, and which leads to a rather vapid conception of politics as an endless sequence of nominalist "revolts", a sort of post-modernist Myth of Sisyphus.

Foucault's political preoccupations were little more substantial than this. He was concerned about the capacity of socialists to construct a rationale of government; about the reconstruction of welfare institutions so as to provide for autonomy as well as security; about the need to resist the politics of law and order, while renewing the political principle of the rule of law. Relying too exclusively on Foucault's well-known remarks about the "specific intellectual", Rajchman makes it appear to say that revolts are more important than rights. In a 1979 article which is very selectively cited by Rajchman, Foucault defines his *morale théorique* as "respect when singularity rebels, intransigence when power infringes on the universal". That intransigence required, as he made clear, the securing of rights guaranteed by laws.

changing division of labour in the Isle of Sheppey.

Taken together, they present a strong case for recognizing the particularity of place and for incorporating a more explicit conception of space in social theory. The sense that a new orthodoxy is being promulgated is belied by the extent to which individual authors take issue with each other. Although the essays were specially commissioned, the opportunity was regrettably not taken of providing authors with the right of reply to questions that are raised about their work within these pages.

It is, finally, rather ironic that a book which aims to convey the importance of the particular and local should need to adopt such a cerebral prose style. It would be unfortunate if the book's central message about the social significance of space were rendered inaccessible because of the language in which the argument is couched.

Taking it out on the terraces

Neil Berry

JAMES WALVIN
Football and the Decline of Britain
139pp. Macmillan. £25 (paperback, £8.95).
0333 422767

Between 1946 and 1960 the average number of "incidents" per football season in Britain stood at thirteen. Since then, the figure has become almost incalculable and British football fans have earned a reputation as the "new barbarians of Europe". Yet, though acres of newspaper have been devoted to analysing the game's malaise, discussion of the subject has more often than not been pitched at the level of baffled outrage. Never was this more crassly the case than in the aftermath of the terrible events - the Bradford fire and the Brussels riot - which brought the 1984-5 season to its ghastly climax. James Walvin's brief study is not notable for the elegance of its prose, but as an antidote to the prevailing hysteria it has much to recommend it.

Walvin writes as a social historian whose previous books include a social history of football. But he also writes as a former fan whose disillusionment with the game following the Bradford and Brussels tragedies became total. He argues that those two events, for all their apparent dissimilarity - the one, seemingly, an accident, the other the concerted act of a crowd of thugs - were both symptoms of an ailing sport within an ailing society. The book divides into two main sections. In the first, which is chiefly concerned with football itself, Walvin identifies among those who have run the game over the years a bone-headed resist-

ance to change. Most British clubs are Victorian and Edwardian institutions set on maintaining methods and traditions forged in earlier and quite different epochs. And, while clubs have been quick to exploit modern money-making tactics, often their physical appearance has changed little since the turn of the century. For many such clubs, prospects are now bleak. A deadly combination of factors - high wages for players, falling gates, the sudden collapse in the mid-1980s of previously inflated transfer fees - has plunged them into what looks to be a hopeless financial "tail-spin". In the summer of 1985, forty-six of the Football League's ninety-two clubs were trading with liabilities in excess of assets. Drastic changes lie ahead.

Mismanagement, however, cannot explain the phenomenal upsurge of football violence and hooliganism in Britain in recent times. Walvin remarks that a good deal of the game's traditional working-class support has melted away with the advent of new patterns of leisure, and that the resultant gap has been filled by a new and rougher breed of fan. But why, he reasonably wonders, is it football which has become the focus for scenes of sensational mayhem such as have been witnessed in recent years? Unemployment seems inadequate as an explanation, even if many of the fans are in fact unemployed: during the Depression of the 1930s football supporters were usually well behaved. In any case, as recent reports have indicated, football's hooligans now include a faction of prosperous, smartly dressed young men in regular work. There is indeed something almost provocatively inscrutable about much of today's soccer violence.

Television is obviously foremost among the variables with which comparative social analysis must contend, and Walvin toys with the

notion that violence on the football terraces is intended for the camera. Yet other sports, which are just as lavishly televised, remain unblemished by the gross exhibitions of violence which have disfigured football. Similarly puzzling is the fact that some football clubs today number vociferous, and no doubt television-conscious, racists among their supporters, while other games with mass followings do not. Avoiding easy answers, Walvin moves on in the second part of his book to consider soccer's troubles in their broader social context; and he makes some tentative connections between the sharp deterioration in the behaviour of certain sections of fans and the equally sharp decline of Britain as an industrial nation. In the regions a pattern of working life which had endured for nearly two hundred years, and which, for good or ill, provided urban communities with their raison d'être, has disappeared as suddenly as it was originally imposed. It would be remarkable if such cataclysmic change were not accompanied by a growth in social pathology.

James Walvin is well aware that his book will invite scorn in quarters where the cry has been for action, not words. *Football and the Decline of Britain* is in part a plea for patient enquiry. "It is not to claim a reprieve for wrong-doers," Walvin remarks, "to suggest both that we need to know why people behave as they do and that we need to cast our gaze more broadly and not to focus uniquely on the game of football itself". Yet, despite, if not because of, its insights, Walvin's book ultimately has the effect of an obituary. On his final page the author mentions some glimmers of light in the dark picture, though he gives little indication where they are coming from. This is a messenger whom many among British football's well-wishers will want to shoot.

Crossing the colour line

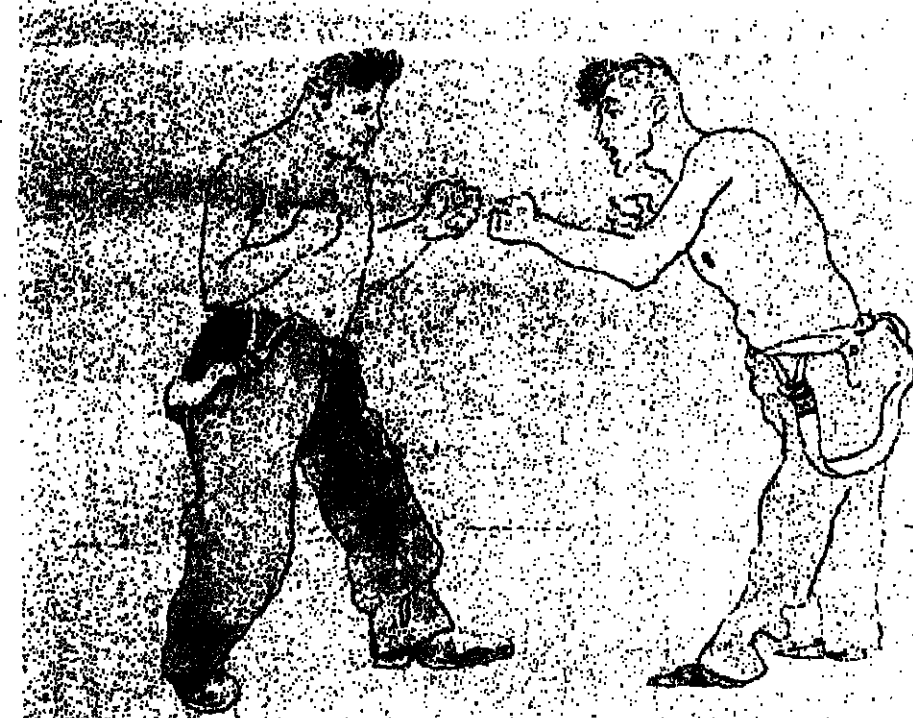
Vernon Scannell

RANDY ROBERTS
Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the era of White Hopes
274pp. Robson. £9.50.
0860512580

The almost superstitious regard for the heavyweight boxing championship of the world originates in the quite fallacious notion that biggest is best; in fact the most skilful and entertaining practitioners of the Noble Art are usually to be found in the divisions below middleweight. However that may be, the majority of the popular legendary figures of the game are heavyweights and among the most famous of these is Jack Johnson, the first black to hold the world title; he won it by knocking out Tommy Burns on Christmas Day, 1908, in Sydney. Johnson held the title for over six years, during which time he decisively demonstrated his superiority over all challengers, black and white. On April 5, 1915, when he was thirty-seven years old, and probably debilitated by his flashy hedonistic way of life at the top, he lost the title in Havana to the "White Hope", Jess Willard, in the twenty-sixth round of a contest that many, including Johnson himself, claimed was "fixed". The ageing ex-champion then engaged in a few unimportant contests and appeared in carnivals and vaudeville, dying in 1946 from injuries sustained in a motor-car accident.

Until Tommy Burns, unable to resist the temptation of the huge purse offered by the Australian promoter, Hugh D. McIntosh, agreed to fight Johnson, the "colour line" had been firmly laid down between black and white fighters. James Jeffries, Burns's predecessor as champion, had replied to a challenge from Johnson by publicly stating, "When there are no white men left to fight I will quit the business", words echoed almost exactly by Jack Dempsey as late as 1920. Johnson's behaviour during his reign as champion did nothing to propitiate his white enemies. On the contrary he flouted their most cherished taboos, ostentatiously displaying his new wealth and consorting almost exclusively with white women, two of whom he was to marry.

Randy Roberts, the author of *Papa Jack*, has made full and intelligent use of the Department of Justice's file on Johnson which was



Mervyn Peake's ink and watercolour drawing of two soldiers boxing with bare fists is one of more than fifty works by the artist included in Sotheby's sale of Illustrated and Private Press Books, Children's Books, Juvenilia and Related Drawings to be held on June 19-20 at their Grosvenor Saleroom, Bloomfield Place, New Bond Street, London W1.

declassified in 1981 and which contains detailed reports from Bureau of Investigation agents on Johnson's public and private life. An outraged and vengeful white establishment was determined that Johnson should pay for his insolence and in 1912 he was convicted of violating the Mann Act (known as the White Slave Traffic Act) which forbade the transportation of women across State lines for immoral or illicit purposes. He fled to Canada and from there to Europe, remaining in nomadic exile for seven years, returning to the United States in 1920 to surrender to the authorities and serve a year in prison.

What makes this biography unusually valuable is the meticulous thoroughness of the author's researches, his scrupulous fairness in dealing with the facts, and the insights into the conditions in which many American blacks were forced to live in the period following the technical abolition of slavery in 1865 (Johnson, born 1875, belonged to the first generation to

be born "free"). While showing proper respect for his subject as a great athlete and a formidable, though entirely egotistical, opponent of racial oppression, Roberts does not mythologize him. The first black world champion was a flamboyant character who loved extravagant living and liked to exacerbate the rage and hatred of white men, not only by his lavish parading of wealth, the flashy clothes and expensive cars, but by exaggerating the sexuality which mocked and threatened their notions of Caucasian superiority. He could be cruel, violent and sometimes vindictive. He was not the heroic figure that Howard Sackler presented in his Broadway play, *The Great White Hope*, but he was an extraordinary man, living through times and in places which supply a variegated backcloth to the drama of his life. Randy Roberts has given us a balanced, informative and continuously readable account of it, in what must be surely the definitive biography.

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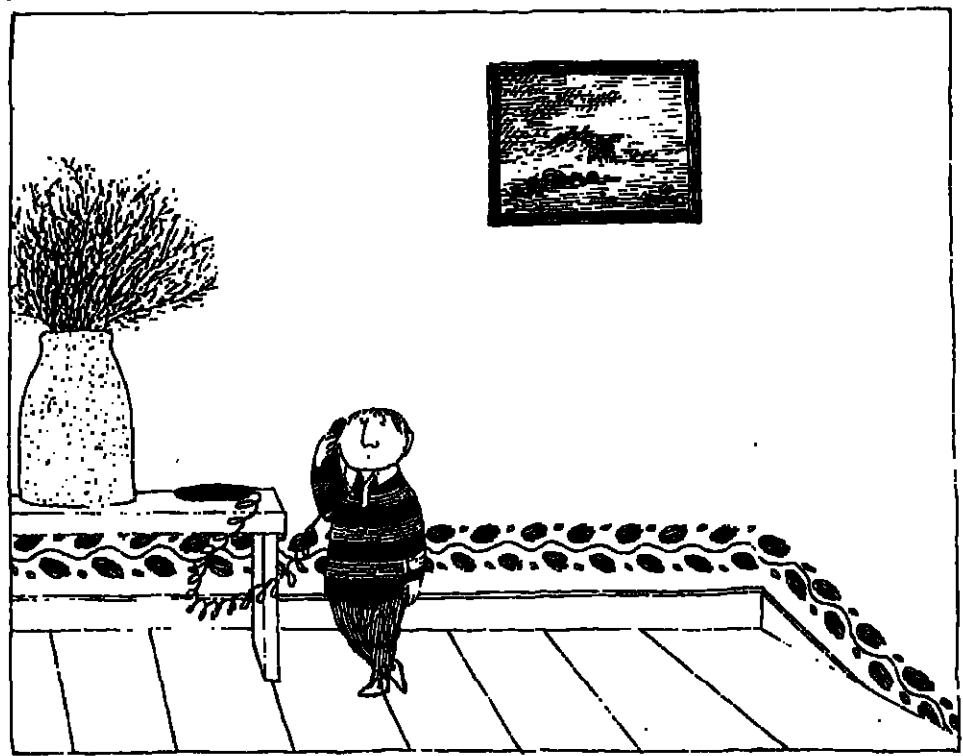
Sarah Carpenter

Is it ironic, or perhaps reassuring, that very young readers exemplify so strikingly many of the tenets of current literary theory? Few parents of toddlers need Derrida to tell them that the activity of reading is a process of endless play, or that, as Barthes claims, the text "asks of the reader a practical collaboration". These truths very soon become self-evident if you take part in the mixture of performance, participation and interpretation that reading to two and three-year-olds involves. Many of the most enduring infants' books at least tacitly recognize these principles, and use the interaction of words and pictures to engage the child (and adult) reader actively and directly in a game of literary creation.

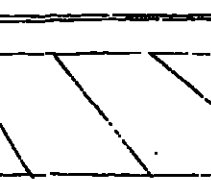
This forms the basis of the very successful *Sheepchase*. It comes from an experienced team: Celia Berridge has entered the visual imagination of a generation of children as the illustrator of the affectionately observed *Postman Pat* books, and she and Paul Rogers have already collaborated in *Forgetmenot* (1984). *Sheepchase* has a strongly rhymed text, solid, bright and detailed pictures, and a satisfyingly circular narrative in which Flossie the sheep evades capture until safely back in her own field. But its reading pleasure is much more alive and flexible than this might suggest. The child is actively invited into both the text and the images. The book is full of questions, simply enough expressed to be part of a real conversation between adult reader and child, and demanding direct verbal responses: "Find her quick! Where did she go? / Jack doesn't know. Do you?" The answers depend on finding the elusive Flossie in the pictures, which themselves often complete meanings unexpressed in the text. The child is in a privileged intimacy with the sheep, able to see round corners and from perspectives denied to the book's characters.

Another book in the same mode is *Do You See What I See?*, whose very title invokes ideas

of the relativity of perception and the free play of interpretation. A small boy tries to persuade his animal friends to accompany him to the circus, but each is engaged in an inexplicable and absorbing search which is finally resolved when all concerned find their tickets. Games proliferate. The book uses trompe l'oeil cut-outs in which the frog seen through a window resolves into a hat, an elephant's trunk into his tail. The finding game in this instance is concerned with the tickets, but the puzzle element is stronger as the pictures are larger and more crowded, and there is less prompting from the text. In fact, it is not until the last page that the object of the searches is identified at all, making first reading confusingly enigmatic. The pictures are satisfyingly detailed and imagina-



One of Edward Gorey's illustrations to Treenhorn's Wish, by Florence Parry Heide, which has recently been published by Oxford University Press (£4.95, 0192798227).



One of Edward Gorey's illustrations to Treenhorn's Wish, by Florence Parry Heide, which has recently been published by Oxford University Press (£4.95, 0192798227).

Problem pages

Gwyneth Williams

ADELE GERAS
Ritchie's Rabbit
Illustrated by Vanessa Juhan-Ottie
Hamish Hamilton. £5.95.
0241 118018
LOUIS BAUM
Are We Nearly There?
Illustrated by Paddy Bouma
Bodley Head. £4.95.
0370 306929

There is no substitute for a good story. Both Adele Geras's *Ritchie's Rabbit* and Louis Baum's *Are We Nearly There?* lack this vital ingredient. Instead, the central ideas are to be found at the end of the books, where the reader discovers that Ritchie in Adele Geras's book and Simon in Louis Baum's are children of separated parents. Both live with their mothers and visit their fathers. The reason for the books becomes clear to the unsuspecting reader: these are stories with an adult purpose. "You are not alone", they say to children in similar situations; "not all families live together".

The strong impression that both stories give is that they were concocted to fit the endings. Adele Geras invents a rabbit made of dough. It is rather endearing with one straight ear and one bent ear each hearing different things. The rabbit becomes squashed in Ritchie's pocket on the way home from playgroup. The adventures of a squashed rabbit, you might think. Not so. The tale becomes more and more contrived until the friendly rabbit is flattened by Ritchie's father, wielding a rolling pin in an attempt to improve it. Instead, he fashions two new sanitized rabbits out of the dough and bakes them hard. They are to live, smiling, on a plate of flowers for ever and ever. Moreover, according to Ritchie, "they'll never quarrel".

"Why won't they quarrel then?" asks his father. "Because", comes the precocious reply, "they'll remember that before we cooked them they used to be just one rabbit." This is a ludicrous and unlikely analogy which makes little sense because one cannot help preferring

the old squashed rabbit to the two new ones. Its demise, too, is rather worrying. The illustrations have some interesting detail, but are old fashioned and give the book a dated appearance.

Louis Baum's book is more fun. It is more direct, has better drawings and is likely to be more easily understood. Simon and his father are on an outing to the park and they are often in situations dear and familiar to most children; having a picnic, squatting on the edge of a pond with ducks in it, buying train tickets and then getting on a train. However, the story is again directed at one point, the poignant moment at the end of the book when Simon asks his father for one more hug, greets his mother and watches his dad disappear into the dark and empty street away from the friendly warmth of his home. Suddenly the reader grasps the sense of the story and cannot avoid feeling both patronized and deceived.

These are not books which aim to explain or explore problems or unusual situations in an open way as, for instance, do the books written by Althea (published by Dinosaur), which address issues such as the arrival of a new baby in a family or a child who has to use a wheelchair. Both the books under review are too narrow to be of real interest as stories. This is a shame, because it is possible to deal with this kind of situation more creatively, as is shown by authors such as Mary Dickinson and the Finnish children's author Camilla Mickwitz, whose books regrettably are not translated into English. In their books adventures take place within a context of the mother at home and the father not at home, and the single-parent family is simply the background to a good story. So it is possible, but *Ritchie's Rabbit* and *Are We Nearly There?* fail to meet the challenge.

The unanimous choice of the jury in the first Macmillan Prize for a children's picture book is John Watson, author of *The Secret Club*, which will be published in the near future by Macmillan. Second prize went to Mark Southgate for *The White Cat*, and third to Andrew Midgley for *Imagine*.

tive, but the text is conversely bare, consisting only of a few speech balloons. Since this tends to force grown-up readers into amplifying verbal explanation of the narrative, they too are contributing to the whole process. The book is more oblique, and consequently rather less dynamic, than *Sheepchase*, but in defining its readers' responses less precisely it perhaps forces them even more to participate in the invention of the work.

Of course, not all infants' books play such overt literary games. Another forceful approach is the almost documentary journalistic realism that offers the child recognizable fragments of its own world transmuted into literary images. The increasing use of dramatized photographs to illustrate small children's

books is symptomatic of this desire to give them a hold on their own actual experience. My Car, though its illustrations are comically semi-stylized drawings, is a good example. Jonathan Allen crystallizes a child's experience of cat-owning into what he himself calls "a series of snapshots", which convey a vivid and strongly unsentimental affection. A rather less successful venture confronting actual experience is *Joyti's Journey* which worthily attempts to deal with the cultural shock of a child moving from India to Britain. Helen Ganly is an established artist, but the collages that illustrate the book, though very attractive in themselves, may be too impressionistic for young children, and fail to give much sense of what is actually like to live in the other culture.

Alongside such, often imaginative, approaches to young children's reading, the traditional infants' books are still going strong. Amanda Davidson's *Teddy* series offers anthropomorphic toys, rather pretty illustrations, and straightforward domestic stories. *Winston's Ice Cream Caper* has more energetic, wilder drawings, and a story combining the gritty mechanical realism of break-down trucks with the holiday excitement of ice cream, speed and the seaside; but it is basically in the same mode, anthropomorphizing animals in a fantasy world which is safely contained but recognizable. There is not a lot in these for the adults who have to read them, but children often seem to get as much pleasure as from more challenging texts.

Paul Rogers and Celia Berridge: *Sheepchase*. Viking Kestrel. £5.95. 0 670 85599 8.
Matthew Price and Sue Porter: *Do You See What I See?* Methuen. £5.95. 0 412 43260 3.
Jonathan Allen: *My Cat*. Macmillan. £4.95. 0 331 41594 9.
Helen Ganly: *Joyti's Journey*. Deutsch. £5.95. 0 231 78999 2.
Amanda Davidson: *Teddy in the Garden*. Collins. £5.95. 0 00 195824 0.
Andrew Martyn and Paula Lawford: *Winston's Ice Cream Caper*. Hamish Hamilton. £5.95. 0 241 1178 8.

Allegorical angles

Blake Morrison

MICHAEL FOREMAN
Panda and the Bushfire
Hamish Hamilton £6.50.
0241 116562
JAN MARK
Out of the Oven
Viking Kestrel. £6.95.
0 670 890337

As authors from Cervantes to Beckett have discovered, few narrative plays are more compelling than the picaresque partnership, the pair of chums (one of them probably a bit of a vagabond) travelling down life's adventure-strewn road. Children's authors, too, have used this formula successfully and though *Panda and the Bushfire* is only the fourth of Michael Foreman's "Panda" picture books, this series about a panda and a winged lion looks set for many further instalments. They make an odd couple (that is part of the fascination) but they are also oddly complementary. Though small and cuddly, Panda has black-ringed eyes, the mark of a sage and seeker. Lion is more the strong, silent type, physical not cerebral, and his large eagle wings get the two of them around.

In their latest Antipodean escapade, our heroes are resting on a journey home when creatures of the forest begin to scurry past, fleeing from a "crackling dry roar". Before they know it they are surrounded, along with "three furry bundles" (koalas, we guess) that have fallen out of a tree, by a fierce forest fire.

With four passengers aboard, the normally invincible Lion has trouble getting airborne but finally achieves lift-off by flying almost straight into the flames. From the haven of a far riverbank, Panda and Lion join the local fire-brigade in putting out the blaze, then regale them with campfire tales of their "travels in distant lands". Will the smallest of the koalas, "who has fallen in love with flying", become a new travelling companion? It looks just possible.

With their allegories, quests and dream-visions, illustrated in lurid and faintly mystical colours, Michael Foreman's books for young children have been known to topple over into portentousness. *Panda and the Bushfire* offers high drama rather than higher wisdom, tapping the fears and thrills inspired by natural disaster. If the words are rather routine, the large, bold, orange and red drawings of treetops exploding "like giant fireworks" have an excitement independent of language.

Jan Mark shares Foreman's taste for the off-beat. Her *Out of the Oven* is much stranger in its restrained, churchy English way than even Foreman's *Land of Dreams*. The story, her first for younger children, springs from a pun rather than an idea. When the grandmother whom (orphaned?) Matty goes to live with calls her cat a new kittens "little devils", we are forced to take this not as a figure of speech but as an echo of her warning that if Matty opens the oven door "the devils will get out". Once one of the oven devils mingles with the kittens in their basket, he is indistinguishable from them but for his scaly black fur and the pair of tiny horns on his head. Gran, discovering his sorcery, wants to put him back in the oven, where all devils belong. But Matty outwits her by sneaking Tiddles (as he is now affectionately known) to church, where he sits contentedly "on the grating where the warm air comes up", an indication (or is it?) that he really is a devil after all.

With or without devil-cats, there can't be many Rogation-tide services in children's literature, and this - along with some sprightly description and metaphor - is evidence of Jan Mark's originality. Anthony Maitland's illustrations add to the domestic eeriness, his nicely ambivalent devil-kittens skulking down kitchen curtains but also giving off ribbons of psychic energy (the satanic equivalent of haloes). Yet the book looks misconceived, a Gothic half-idea padded out and likely to lose a child's attention before it winds up inconsequentially with the visit of scholars (black magi?) to witness the miraculous events in Mark's sleepy village.

Paperbacks

Biography and memoirs

ELIZA FAY. *Original Letters from India*. Edited and with an introduction by E. M. Forster. With a new introduction by M. M. Kaye. 288pp. The Hogarth Press. £3.95. 0 7012 1000 1. Spanning the years 1779 to 1797, the letters of Eliza Fay are something of a literary curiosity, as E. M. Forster realized when he discovered them in India. At the end of her life, in 1816, Eliza Fay arranged for the publication of her letters in the hope that the proceeds would go towards paying off her creditors. They ran to a second edition and were republished, in much edited form, in 1907 and it was in this form that Forster first met them. His own edition (published in 1925) restores the original idiosyncratic text. (Eliza Fay's grammar owed nothing to convention.) His introductory notes provide what background and biographical information he has been able to glean. Eliza Fay undertook her journey to Calcutta, with her new husband, full of excitement and enthusiasm which remained unabated through the vicissitudes of a journey packed with incident and danger and a series of revelations which afforded the unavoidable conclusion that her husband was a less than strong and worthy character. Eliza Fay was, in Forster's words, "underbred and quarrelsome". She is ignorant of much ("her mental equipment was that of an intelligent Lady's maid") believing, for instance, that the Alps are only one mountain thick, but she is also "frank and naive . . . a soul courageous and gallant, an eye and ear always on the watch . . . To strength of will she joins high powers of observation." In spite of being "Neither rich nor well-connected, nor good-tempered nor beautiful nor improper", she expresses her highly original character and remains true to it throughout while giving us fascinating accounts of contemporary history.

PHILIP ROTH. *Reading Myself and Others*. 326pp. Penguin. £3.95. 0 1400 76816. This first Penguin, but not first paperback, edition of Philip Roth's collection of essays, *Reading Myself and Others* (first published in 1975 and reviewed in the TLS of December 9 that year), proclaims itself "expanded", but the new material amounts to no more than three interviews Roth gave in the early 1980s. Roth's reading of "myself" gives rise to discussions of several of his own novels, including a piece

AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Geoffrey Best's books include *Honour Among Men and Nations: Transformations of an idea*, 1983.
Michael Carrithers is co-editor of *Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* which was published earlier this year. His *Buddha* appeared in 1983.
Christopher Chippindale is Research Fellow in Archaeology at Girton College, Cambridge.
Robert Craft is the editor of *Stravinsky: Selected correspondence*, the third volume of which was published last year. He contributes frequently to the *New York Review of Books*.
Valentine Cunningham is a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and author of *Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian novel*, 1975.
Dick Davis is Northern Arts Literary Fellow at the Universities of Newcastle and Durham. His *Wisdom and Wilderness: The achievement of Yvor Winters* was published in 1983.
Gavan Davis is Professor of Pacific History at the Australian National University, Canberra. His books include *A Dream of Islands: Voyages of self-discovery in the South Seas*, 1980, and he is currently at work on a study of Second World War prisoners of the Japanese.
Gordon Donaldson is Emeritus Professor of Scottish History at the University of Edinburgh.
Stephen Fender is Professor of American Studies at the University of Sussex. He is the author of *American Literature in Context, 1620-1830*, 1984.
Philip French is the film critic of the Observer and producer of Radio 3's weekly arts programme, *Critics' Forum*. His books include *The Movie Moguls: An informal history of the Hollywood tycoons*.
James Gambrell is a contributing editor of *Art in America*.
Victoria Glandfield is the author of *Vita: The life of V. Sackville-West*, which was published in 1983.
John Gordon is co-author of *The Foucault Effect: Essays on governmental rationality*, which will be published shortly.
Richard Harris covered Aalen affairs for *The Times* from 1950 to 1983.
R. V. Holdsworth's edition of *Ben Jonson's Episcopo* was published in 1979.
Peter Jackson is the author, with Susan I. Smith, of *Exploring Social Geography*, 1984.
Patrick McCarthy is Professor of American History at the University of Manchester.
Patrick McCarthy's books include *Celine*, 1975, and *Camus: A critical study of his life and work*, 1982.
Wilfrid Mellers's books include *Back and the Dance of God*, 1980, and *Beethoven and the Voice of God*, 1983.
Stephen Miller's natural history television series *Nature in its Place* was shown on Irish Television last year. At present he is writing a book on the conflict between conservation and forestry in Britain.
Gwyn Murray is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. His books include *Early Greece*, 1980.
Michael Nève is a lecturer in the History of Medicine at University College London. At present he is preparing a Penguin edition of Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle*.
Bernard O'Donoghue's collection of poems, *Razorblades and Pencils*, was published in 1984.
Adelele Mayle-Pearce's collection of short stories, *Loyalities*, will be published in the autumn.
Simon Rae's poems appeared in *Faber's Poetry Introduction* 5, 1982.
Frederic Raphael's collection of stories, *Thinks of England*, will be published this summer.
Christopher Reid's latest collection of poems, *Katerina Brac*, was published last year.
Gilbert Riddock is a lecturer in Welsh at University College, Cardiff.
Daniel Sault is the author of *Knight and Esquire: The Gloucestershire gentry in the fourteenth century*, 1981. His *Scenes from Provincial Life* will be published later this year.
Veronica Sealant is compiling an anthology of sporting literature. His novel, *Ring of Truth*, was published in 1983.
John Seelye's books include *Melville: The ironic diagram*, 1970.
A. A. Sharpe is a lecturer in History at the University of York. His books include *Crime in Seventeenth-Century England: A county study*, 1983 and *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750*, 1984.
Susan Strange is Professor of International Relations at London School of Economics. Her *Casino Capitalism* will be published shortly.
Jonathan Taylor was the winner of the first prize in the TLS Cheltenham Poetry Competition last year.
Frank Tashiro lives in Japan. His *Collected Stories* was published in 1984.
Katherine Worth is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at Royal Holloway College, Surrey. She is the author of *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett, 1878, and Oscar Wilde*, 1983.

entitled "How Did You Come to Write That Book, Anyway?" about the origins of *Portnoy's Complaint*. The "others" include several Jewish writers, including some contemporaries, and Milan Kundera, of whom Roth was an early promoter. Roth may lack the dialectic and anecdotal skill of the greatest of his essay-writing contemporaries - Vidal, Baldwin, Mailer - but nothing reprinted here is without the impression of his strong intelligence.

Natural history

THOMAS BELT. *The Naturalist in Nicaragua*. 403pp, with line drawings and a Foreword by Daniel H. Jazen. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. £10.95. 0 226 04220 0. Thomas Belt, the Tyneside-born mining engineer and naturalist, was a remarkable man. During his brief life (he died at the age of forty-five), he travelled extensively in three continents, and managed to combine an intense appreciation of the natural world with a painstaking approach to scientific evidence. First published in 1874, after he had just completed a four-year stint as superintendent of a gold-mining concern in Nicaragua (the present reprint is based on the revised second edition of 1888), Belt's book was described by Charles Darwin as "the best of all natural history journals ever published". Despite its wealth of detail and matter-of-fact style, the book is a pleasure to read. Throughout, the Tynesider's enthusiasm for his subject shines through and he is able to make descriptions of the auriferous qualities of quartz and the complex world of the leaf-cutter ant as compelling as a detective story. Belt himself remarked that he had "compressed the thoughts of a lifetime" into his work, and he uses his Nicaraguan evidence as a starting point for a whole range of interesting scientific theories from the formation of whirlwinds to the effects of the ice age, theories which were dismissed in his lifetime as fanciful but which have since been borne out by research. This is a charming book, and one which will be read with profit by specialists and amateurs alike.

Travel

W. H. AUDEN and CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD. *Journey to a War*. 272pp. Faber. £3.95. 0 571 10285 9. Undertaken in 1938 at the request of their publishers for a book about "the East" ("the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war decided us to go to China"), a six-month trip taking in Hong-Kong, Hankow, Suchow, Sian and Shanghai was written up in prose by Isherwood and sandwiched between some of Auden's best sonnets - "Whither?", "The Ship", "Macao" - and some of his slickest - "In Time of War". The long verse "Commentary" sets the journey, the war and most of human history in a long, Olympian perspective (Auden had spent the trip looking at things from considerably closer up, taking photographs which are not included in this edition). Isherwood's "Travel Diary" is economical, pungent, witty, fragmented and very telling; superb sketches of smiling officials, British diplomats, Canadian missionaries and the Chinese military, and notable encounters with, say, Madame Chiang Kai-shek or Peter Fleming (who abetted an adventure to the front) are punctuated by sudden confrontations with the harsher aspects of hostilities. There is virtually no explicit political comment until the end, when unpalatable truths are recollected in the tranquillity of the Shanghai International Settlement. The tone is rather one of barely suppressed schoolboy larkiness; the eyes of both "Au Dung" and "Y Hsiao Wu" grow wide at the prospect of excitements, but are alert to farce, irony and inscrutable quiddity as well.

Reviews by: Mary Furness, Lindsay Duguid, James Campbell, Peter Carey and Alan Jenkins.

Also in paperback

JOCelyn BAINES. *Joseph Conrad: A critical biography*. 606pp. Penguin. £4.95. 0 14 058018 2. First published in 1960 and reviewed in the TLS of February 5 that year.
MARK BERNARD-JONES. *The Viceroy of India*. 343pp. Constable. £5.95. 0 09 465780 7. First published in 1982 and reviewed in the TLS of March 18, 1983.

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